# The Church in China:
# A Biographical Case Study of a Rural Church Network in Sanyuan County, Shaanxi Province, China

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This project, in the form of a biographical case study, is an attempt to recover and analyze the early history of a rural church network around Sanyuan in Shaanxi province, China. Using a combination of foreign missionary writings, Chinese records, and oral interviews, this project seeks to recover the lost history of the Sanyuan churches and shed some light on how the church took root in China as a whole. More specifically, this thesis will analyze and reevaluate our current understanding of the processes by which the church took root and Christianity spread across China in light of information compiled in the biographies of prominent Sanyuan area Christians. In addition, I will explore how the use of different sources, in this case missionary writings and Chinese records and interviews, can paint very different pictures of the past and attempt to reconcile these often contradictory views. Far from being an insurmountable obstacle, these differences can be an advantage for the historian, especially in cross-cultural history, by allowing us multiple perspectives from which to build a composite picture of the past which may be more true to the actual experiences of the people involved.

The bulk of this thesis, after an introduction, a review of the salient literature, and a look at the Sanyuan mission history, will be composed of two main parts: the data collected in this project, namely the biographies of twenty-two Sanyuan Christians and an analysis of the implications and conclusions that can be drawn

from these biographies.

Information gathered in the interviews reveal that the churches were even more independent at an earlier stage than the missionaries either realized or acknowledged in their writings. Even early on, Chinese Christians showed much foresight, maturity, and initiative in the establishment and expansion of the church. Thus this case study has confirmed my suspicion that relying solely on the records of foreign missionaries is not enough to come to an accurate understanding of how the church took root in China.

As a case study, the history of the church at Sanyuan challenges certain assumptions and traditional interpretations about the character of the development of the Chinese church. While in the past, many Western histories focused on the missionary character of Chinese Christianity, Chinese histories focused on the imperialistic character of Christianity in China. History, however, rarely proves as simple as ideology.

An analysis of the history of the Sanyuan area churches which combines mission, local, and interview sources reveals the unique character of these immigrant churches. Seeking to plant themselves in a foreign community without any initial help from foreign missionaries, these churches broke both the Chinese and Western stereotypes. The establishment of the church at Sanyuan was neither an extension of imperialistic power, nor a direct product of heroic missionary efforts. It hints at the early existence of a distinctly Chinese and profoundly indigenous Christianity.

# 中國基督教鄉村教會網絡：
# 陝西三原的傳記個案研究

本論文以傳記個案的方式來探索中國陝西省三原縣鄉間教會網絡的早期歷史。文本使用外國傳教士作品、中國方志和口述歷史三種資料來探索三原教會的興衰歷史，並揭示基督教會在中國各地扎根、擴展的過程。具體來說，這篇論文會以同時，筆者亦會利用外國傳教士的作品、中國地方志以及本地人的回憶，描繪三原教會歷史的不同面向，並嘗試調和這些不同敍述角度之間的衝突。這些衝突並非不可調和，它們更可以幫助歷史學家在研究跨文化的歷史時，提供不同觀點去構建一個較爲全面的圖像，這影像能讓我們更接近當時人物的實際經驗。

除緒論與文獻回顧外，這篇論文有兩個重要的組成部分：所收集到的二十二名三原縣基督徒的資料傳記，以及從這些傳記分析出來的意義和結論。

採訪資料所表現的三原教會，比傳教士及其作品當中描述的三原教會顯得更爲獨立和成熟。即使是在教會建立和傳播早期，中國基督徒便顯示出相當具遠見、成熟和主動。從而這個個案也印證了筆者的質疑：只依賴外國傳教士的紀錄來描繪基督教會在中國扎根過程是不夠全面的。

結合傳教士、當地和探訪資料的三原教會歷史，展現了這個移民教會的獨特性。這些教會最初在沒有任何外來的幫助之下就在異地生根，它們打破了中西方對於這個問題認識上的舊俗。三原教會的建立既不是帝國勢力的外延，也不是傳教士們英雄般努力的直接結果。它暗示了早期明顯屬於中國並且深深根植於本土基督教的存在。

# Chapter 1
## Introduction: Why Sanyuan?

Chinese church history is an exciting and challenging field of academic inquiry which academics have found fruitful for a number of different types of inquiries. Some have presented the story of the Chinese church as the triumph of dauntless missionary heroes who boldly claimed and bravely occupied pagan territory in the name of Christ. Others have detected a more sinister agenda at work in the gunboat diplomacy and unequal treaties which forced China open to foreigners and prepared the way for an onslaught of missionaries to come bearing their foreign gospel. Still others have found a complex story of conflicting identities, competing nationalisms and imperial ambitions at work in the spread of Christianity. Some have used the story of the church in China as an entry point to examine the forces of cross-cultural conflict which characterized China's stormy path to modernization. Very few, however, have approached the history of the Chinese church from the perspective of the Chinese Christians themselves. This biographical case study seeks to do just that.

This study examines the history of the Chinese church as the history of Chinese Christians. Specifically, this study focuses on the case of a rural church network in Sanyuan county, just north of Xian in Shaanxi province which was founded with the help of English Baptist missionaries in 1892. Through the reconstruction and analysis of the lives of important Chinese Christians, this study seeks to draw conclusions about the nature of the church's founding and early development, especially in light of the changing relationship between the Chinese Christians and the foreign missionaries.

This case study combines information from Chinese and English written sources

with oral interviews in order to reconstruct biographical sketches of twenty-two Chinese Christians who were instrumental in the founding and development of the Sanyuan area network of Protestant churches. This compilation provides a cross-section of the Sanyuan churches' leadership across several generations. In so doing, this study aims to accomplish two main purposes. First, it seeks to understand the founding and development of the church in China from the Chinese perspective by looking at its history as reflected in the lives of its leaders and important members. The purpose in this approach is to challenge the perspective that the early history of the Chinese church was mainly a missionary story. Second, this study seeks to use information from a variety of sources to test and reevaluate previous ideological paradigms which have dominated the writing of both "official" Chinese histories and Western mission histories. An analysis of these biographical sketches shows the essential, early, and growing importance of Chinese participation in the founding and development of the Sanyuan area churches. The information presented in this study challenges the conclusion of some scholars that churches with denominational backgrounds were especially dependent on foreign missionary support and could not be classified as indigenous in any significant way before 1949.

This thesis consists of five chapters. After this introduction, chapter two places this study in its historiographical context and outlines its sources and methodology. Chapter three presents the history of the Shaanxi BMS mission and churches from the foreign missionary perspective. This history not only provides a basic chronological framework of important events and trends which shaped the development of the Christian community at Sanyuan, it also allows for an analysis of the missionaries, their work, and especially their relationships with the Chinese Christians.

The meat of this study is contained in chapter four which turns its focus to the

Chinese side of the story. Twenty-two biographical sketches of important Christians from the Sanyuan area churches compiled from mission sources, Chinese gazetteers and interviews are presented. First, the role of the founders will be examined in the establishment of the church, noting their education, background, and the historical context in which they acted. Second, the developments that took place as the second and third generation of leaders arose will be examined, especially in the context of the rapidly changing national situation. Special interest is taken in examining the development of Chinese church leadership across several generations.

Finally, both the Western and Chinese sides of the story will be brought back together and analyzed in chapter five and an attempt will be made to reconcile the sometimes complimentary and sometimes competing and contradictory pictures of Sanyuan church history presented in Western and Chinese sources. Chapter five looks specifically at the issue of indigenization, especially in relation to the quest to develop self-sufficient churches, which in China has been distilled into the ideal of the "Three-Self" church. The case is made that at least for the Sanyuan network of churches, significant autonomy and independence was achieved long before the establishment of the Three-Self Patriotic Church after Liberation.

## Chapter 2
## Surveying the Field and Mapping the Course: Historiography, Methodology, and Sources

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first is a brief introduction to the historiography of the academic study of Christianity in China, beginning with the pioneers at Harvard and leading up to the development of more sino-centric and church centered approaches of study demonstrated by several current, prominent authors. The second section introduces the sources used in this study, including an introduction to the problems they raise and the significance that they lend to this work, and outlines the methodology used in this study.

### Surveying the Field: Historiographical Context and Literature Review

Most mark the beginning of the academic study of Protestant Christianity in China as commencing in the nineteen fifties and sixties with the group of Harvard scholars led by John K. Fairbank, who advocated the use of understudied missionary records as an important historical resource for the study of China's modernization. This instigated a period of scholarly work in which mission work and missionaries were studied in light of their social, political, and religious impact on the development of modern China. Chinese response to the Western missionaries was also studied, both that of converts and violent resistors.[1] This approach was developed in response to earlier work which had chronicled and evaluated the mission enterprise in China in light of the worldwide Christian missionary movement. These works were epitomized in Kenneth S. Latourette's monumental work *A History of Christian Missions in China.* While Latourette sought to understand the missiological significance of Christianity in China, the school that

Fairbank initiated primarily sought to understand its sinological significance.[2] While Fairbanks' approach has produced much valuable work, it has since been criticized as neglecting to treat important internal circumstances which influenced China's development and thus producing an ethnocentric "challenge-response" theory of China's modernization. Thus scholars, led by Paul Cohen in his book *Discovering History in China* published in 1984, sought to recenter their approach to Chinese history and avoid the ethnocentric mistakes of their predecessors. [3] This shift to what Cohen termed a "China-centered" approach to the study of Chinese history has also been applied to the study of Christianity in China.

Fortuitously, this new direction in the study of Chinese history has combined with the effects of a simultaneous revival of Christianity in China following the Cultural Revolution to affect a monumental shift in the study of Christianity in China.[4] With the unprecedented growth and expansion of the Chinese church in the last thirty years, the need to examine the origins and expansion of Christianity in China as an indigenous faith has become apparent. When foreign missionaries were forced to leave China in the early 1950s, most assumed that their foreign religion had also been permanently expelled. However, the revival and unprecedented growth of Christianity in China over the past several decades has proven that Chinese Christians have struggled, grown, and matured through the trials of the last century of political and economic upheaval and have made the faith their own. Thus, academics have realized the need to document and study the origins, growth, and struggles of Christianity in China not just as the tale of a great missionary endeavor, but as an emerging indigenous faith. While some scholars had studied Christianity in China in order to explain its failure, many others now realized the need to explain its success.[5] This new wave of research is aimed

toward understanding Christianity in China neither as a heroic nor a misguided and ultimately ill-fated missionary program, but as a nascent indigenous phenomenon.

This paradigm shift has not only caused historians and sinologists to readjust their approach to the study of Christianity in China; it has also affected current missiologists who have realized the need to acknowledge the fact that Christianity is no longer primarily a Western religious phenomenon. In fact missiologists and church historians such as Phillip Jenkins, Adrian Hastings, and David Aikman have argued that the current centers of Christianity today are in the non-western world.[6] The combination of the decline of religiosity in Europe and America and the continued spread and growth of the church in Africa, Asia, and South America have brought about a new age of global Christianity that finds its centers in Seoul, Beijing, and Manila instead of Geneva, Rome, or the Bible belt of the American mid-west. Thus scholars of all stripes have realized the necessity of studying the third world church both within the framework of an emerging global phenomenon and as histories of emerging indigenous religious communities, not merely as the product of Western economic, political, and cultural dominance.

Christianity can no longer be assumed to be the property of the West. The growth and spread of Christianity must be examined both on the global scale and specifically within each local context. For historians of Chinese Christianity, the implications of this shift are broad. Historians must examine the development of Christianity in China both as a manifestation of a dynamic global movement and as the emergence of an indigenous phenomenon with characteristics unique to its cultural and historical setting.

Most modern historians of Chinese Christianity, however, have chosen to focus mainly on the latter approach. They have sought to correct the ethnocentric biases

of earlier mission histories by pursuing a "China-centered" approach to understanding Christianity in the Chinese context. However, the problems encountered in the application of this approach are not insignificant. First of all, both the words *Christianity* and *China* indicate the problem of scope. The forms of Christianity in China today include the categories of Catholic and Protestant, government endorsed "official" churches and "underground" house churches and house church networks, urban and rural churches, Han and minority Christians, and all the variety inherent in the cultural and linguistic diversity found across China's twenty-three provinces. When these differences are added to the wide variety of denominational and theological backgrounds of the Chinese churches, it is easy to see how "Chinese Christianity" has become an overwhelmingly multifaceted subject. This has led Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan to conclude that, "To speak of 'Christianity in China' is only useful at a high level of abstraction, as when talking of 'Christianity in Europe'.... The research agenda at present should include detailed local investigations that could eventually provide data for broader conclusions."[7] Their call seems to have resonated. Area studies are proving to be a fruitful method of breaking down the problem of "Chinese Christianity" into feasible research projects.[8] In like manner, this project is a regional study focused on the history of the local church of Sanyuan county in Shaanxi province.

A second problem with applying a China-centered approach to the study of Christianity in China is the risk of losing sight of the unique internal elements that shaped the churches' character and development. Ying Fuk-Tsang warned of this possibility saying, "The center of the study of modern Chinese Christian history should not merely be 'China,' but rather its core should be 'Christian.'"[9] In other words, it is dangerous to pursue a purely "China-centered" approach to the study of

the history of Christianity in China which fails to consider the historical and global context of Christian history. Thus, some scholars have proposed that a "church-centered" approach should replace the purely "China-centered" approach to Chinese Christian history.

A "church-centered" approach to Christianity in China opens up new depths of possibilities for academic research. While the framework for both Western ethno-centric and purely China centered approaches tend to place the foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians on opposite side of the cultural divide between East and West, a "church-centered" approach allows for a more nuanced and multi-faceted evaluation of the relationship between missionaries and local Christians.[10]

In seeking a deeper understanding of the Chinese church, the logical place to begin is with individual Chinese Christians. Daniel Bays, a prominent scholar of the history of Christianity in China, has advocated that while future research in the field should seek a balanced evaluation of the contribution of foreign missions to the spread of Christianity in China, it should also seek to give credit where it is due to the Chinese Christians.

> In addition, and perhaps even more important, the focus of our historical analysis of how the Chinese church has become what it is today should be on the Chinese Christians, who both as leaders and as lay persons, have shaped its destiny over the past century in a quest for autonomy.[11]

Many scholars have produced fruitful work on individual Chinese Christians including Daniel Bays, Lauren Pfister, Ying Fuk Tsang, and Philip Leung.[12] Others have found prosopography, or collected biography, to be a useful method for the study of Christianity and Chinese society, allowing them to compare many

individuals within a particular historical setting and reach broader conclusions about the historical circumstances in which the participants lived.[13] Jessie G. Lutz has made a particularly important contribution to the use of collective biographies as a tool for the study of both Christianity in China and late 19th century Chinese society with her biographical study of Hakka Christians of the German Basel mission.[14]

However, the implementation of a biographical approach to the study of Chinese church history is no simple task. Paramount among practical concerns is the issue of sources. Early studies of Christianity in China were done mainly by westerners, often missionaries, and were based largely on missionary writings, and thus contained many biases inherent in their foreign points of view. Thus it was not the history of Chinese Christianity that was written but rather the history of western missions in China.[15] However, while much current scholarship, including this work, may seek to understand the history of the Chinese church on its own terms, the problem of sources remains.

Scholars have used various combinations of sources and methods to overcome these limitations. Jessie and Ray Lutz produced valuable work on early Hakka Christians through the use of local church leaders' autobiographies translated and transcribed by German Basel missionaries who worked with them. These, in combination with other mission records, form the basis for their biographical study of early Hakka Christians and the society in which they lived.[16] Ryan Dunch has broken new ground with his examination of Fuzhou Christians which relied primarily on Chinese county and state records which mention local Christians who held prominent political positions.[17] Alan Sweeten has challenged previous negative stereotypes about the position of Christians within their communities with his work on rural Catholics of Jiangxi province through a reexamination of local

religious court case records (教案).[18] These scholars, and many others, have successfully made use of the limited sources available to mine out information about Chinese Christians and local Christian communities. This study has likewise made use of all available forms of sources which could provide information on the members of the rural Christian communities of Shaanxi province, including government records, articles, mission archives and biographies, and oral interviews.

Mapping the Course: Methodology and Sources

My interest in the Shaanxi region came about from the personal experience of living there for two years as a language student in Xian. However, it was only after having coming to Hong Kong to begin graduate school that I discovered the existence and significance of the Sanyuan area churches on a subsequent visit back to the region in December of 2004. At that time, I was able to meet Rev. Zhang Guanru (张冠儒), the eighty-four year old pastor of the Sanyuan church and Rev. Wang Hong (王红), the principal of the Xian Bible School and descendant of Wang Yuan (王源), one of the founding elders from Shandong. These two became my principal contacts and sources for this project, and in the process I am glad to say have also become my friends. The history and stories that Pastor Zhang shared with me on that first visit in his poorly heated office next to the nearly century old Sanyuan church building ignited my curiosity in the place. As Zhang and Wang were also involved in the beginnings of a similar project to collect oral accounts and rewrite the history of the Shaanxi churches, I felt the timing for collaborative work between us couldn't be better.[19]

I returned to Hong Kong where I was finishing up an MA in Religious Studies at the time and began to look for relevant resources about the Sanyuan area churches.

In the case of the churches at Sanyuan, as for many others, most local church records were destroyed in the Cultural Revolution. All that remains of these are the memories of the pastors and church members who were involved in writing them and are still living in the region.[20] Extensive mission records, however, stored in libraries in Hong Kong and overseas, have proven very useful to this project.

Thus the source materials for this project fall into two major categories: mission records, and Chinese sources. General records of the mission enterprise in China have provided helpful background information.[21] Several mission histories and missionary biographies which chronicle the experience of the English Baptist Missionary Society and several of its missionaries who served in Shaanxi province have been more specifically helpful.[22]

Thus the first task of this project was to read through the available mission materials which chronicle the history of the Shaanxi BMS mission and the missionaries who contributed to it. During this phase, I discovered that while Chinese Christians were often overlooked, unmentioned, or remain nameless in the missionary sources, a few prominent Christians were described by the missionaries in varying degrees of detail. Buried in the histories, biographies, and memoirs that missionaries left behind are references, descriptions, anecdotes, and sometimes even short biographical sketches of some of the prominent Chinese church leaders with whom they worked.

Thus the next logical step was to collect these various descriptions and mentions and attempt to reconstruct biographical sketches of specific Chinese Christians from them. The information I collected in this stage resulted in information on ten prominent Chinese church leaders and lay workers from Sanyuan and Xian. These reconstructions became the topic of a short paper and more

importantly formed part of the basis for my interviews with Sanyuan church members later that summer.

On the Chinese side, resources were less plentiful.[23] Primary sources (church records, early church histories, and even gravestones) that once existed have disappeared. Recently published county gazetteers (地方志) often dedicate a few paragraphs to the history of religious institutions in each county, including local Three-Self churches, some of which were the originally BMS affiliated institutions in the Sanyuan area. Through the interviews, I found that the accounts in county gazetteers were actually often based on personal memories as well, sometimes of the very people I was interviewing. While the original church records and histories were lost in the Cultural Revolution, in some cases the authors of the works are still living, and their memories, either of events that they had witnessed or had studied and written about, often become the basis for these modern accounts. Thus it seems to me that these accounts should be treated as compiled oral histories, instead of as written records in the traditional sense. In addition, political concerns must also be taken into account when reading these official government records.

A comparison of the information revealed in the interviews, missionary records, and Chinese sources demonstrate how the use of different sources can paint very different pictures of the past. However, I believe that these differences can be an advantage for the historian, especially in cross-cultural history, by allowing us multiple perspectives from which to build a composite picture of the past which may be more true to the actual experiences of the people involved. The content in the mission records and the Chinese gazetteers differed greatly. Missionaries writing about their Chinese colleagues emphasized their character, family background, education, church work, and praised them especially for loyalty to the mission and

denomination. The records of important Chinese Christians listed in the local gazetteers were much less personal and read more like a resume, listing positions held in various organizations and emphasizing economic and social achievements. Foreign missionaries were rarely mentioned, and Chinese leaders were praised for their efforts to promote an independent and self-sufficient church. Not surprisingly, there is little overlap in the leaders mentioned by the two types of sources. Thus, one of the aims of the interviews was to incorporate a third source which could help to reconcile these seeming contradictions and come to a more accurate view of the nature and dynamics of the founding and growth of these churches.

The information gathered from the Chinese written records, combined with the biographical reconstructions gleaned from the missionary records became the basis for my interviews with elderly church leaders and members in the summer of 2006. Before I went into the interviews, I created biographical fact sheets about each person mentioned or described in the mission records and gazetteers. These made it possible to easily assess what was known and unknown about each figure and provided a basis from which to interview those who might have known them.

During the month I spent in Shaanxi in July of 2006, I took three trips to the small towns and villages north of Xian to visit the churches in Sanyuan (三原), Gospel Village (福音村), Taihe Village (太和村), Revival Village (复兴村), Yongle (永乐), Gaoling (高陵), and Xianyang(咸阳). Working with contacts in the Xian Bible School, I was able to interview nine people who were able to give me information on twenty-six important church leaders whom they had closely worked with, studied under, or were directly related to. Often I went into the interviews with little more than a name (and only the English spelling of it), a hometown, and an occupation. A few included some family details, a conversion story, or an

amusing anecdote found in the mission records. Sometimes no one I asked had ever heard of someone described in detail by the missionaries. Other times just mentioning a name would stimulate the recounting of memories of old friends, relatives and colleagues. At times the interviewees consulted with one another to try to reach a consensus on the details of certain events; at other times, their accounts contradicted one another. These contradictions and variations are noted when they occur.

Traditional historians have often eschewed the use of oral tradition and personal memories because of their dubious reliability as historical sources. Michel de Certeau has argued that human memory is "mobile," meaning that an individual's memories are fluid and highly alterable. This implies that not only will the memories of different people vary from one another, but also the memories of one individual may contain contradictory elements. How can such a volatile and ambiguous source serve historians in search of the truth about the past? This question has led many historians to completely reject any legitimate place for the use of oral sources in history writing. For example, the famous A.J.P. Taylor derided oral interviews as merely "old men drooling about their youth."[24]

More recently, however, historians have begun to question the unbiased, scientific nature of histories that were written on the basis of written records alone. In the modern context of nation-states, political concerns often shape the ideology that acts as a filter to what can become history, or the official story. Mariko Taminoi, for one, has pointed out the necessary bias of "official" histories that are written from positions of power which have an interest in presenting a certain version of the past.[25] In other words, governments seeking legitimization will often enshrine a favorable version of the past in official histories to serve their own

interests. This has led scholars to call for the inclusion of nontraditional sources such as oral interviews in the writing of histories in the attempt to "democratize" history through the inclusion of as many memories of the past as possible. The realization that written documents may contain just as much bias and error as human memories has led historians to embrace nontraditional sources as a means to check and critically evaluate the accuracy and potential biases of official histories.

In addition, oral histories and official accounts may be linked, compared, and combined in the writing of histories. Dominick LaCapra, whose work on the holocaust made heavy use of the memories of victims, calls this process "working through." "Working through," for LaCapra, "includes a combination of narrative and commentary in self-aware historiography."[26] In other words, both traditional and nontraditional sources such as memories should be employed in history writing, but neither should be uncritically embraced. In this thesis, I propose to "work through" three types of memories: the collective memories and official histories found in current Chinese records, the memories of British missionaries who recorded their experiences in China, and the memories of individual present day Shaanxi Christians whose stories have never before been recorded.

This use of a combination of sources written by foreign missionaries, those of Chinese origin, and contemporary interviews makes this study unique and lends itself to an analysis not only of the combined content that they reveal, but also of the fascinating contrast of the types of information that each offers. Often, what one source fails to mention is even more instructive than what it does.

Scholars have long acknowledged that mission records only tell part of the story, and this is no less true of the records left by the Sanyuan area missionaries. Missionary biographies and histories were written to a western, Christian audience.

They were written not only to record events, but also to justify the work, inspire devotion, and stimulate support. Missionaries loved to write. They wrote about China, about Christianity, and about the Chinese church. But perhaps more than anything else, they wrote about each other. Thus the main focus of the writings left by the Sanyuan and Gospel Village missionaries are the missionaries themselves. Chinese Christians appear as incidentals or examples. Thus a casual reader of these records could easily come to the conclusion that western missionaries were the most significant participants in the spread of Christianity in China.

However, Chinese Christians were not incidental to the establishment and growth of the church in China. Although the contribution of Chinese Christians as a group was essential to the spread of Christianity in China; individually, they left behind few written records. This case study has thus far confirmed my suspicion that relying solely on the records of foreign missionaries is not enough to come to an accurate understanding of how the church took root in China. While there are significant challenges in the attempt to find and recover Chinese records and memories, it is essential to the writing of Chinese church history.

This fact is what brought me back to the villages of Shaanxi to in search of older church members and pastors who had known some of the earlier Chinese pastors, evangelists, and lay people who had been instrumental in the founding and growth of the Sanyuan area churches. My hope was that a reexamination of the history of the Sanyuan churches which seeks to incorporate and reconcile both mission and Chinese sources would be able to shed some light on the Chinese participation in the establishment and growth of the Sanyuan churches as well as allow some new insights into the nature of the spread of Christianity in China.

[1] For example, see Philip West's study of the first Chinese principal of a Christian school, "Christianity and Nationalism: The Career of Wu Lei-ch'uan at Yenching University," in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), and Paul A. Cohen's study of the anti-foreign movement in *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Anti-Foreignism 1860-1870.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

[2] Cohen, *China and Christianity,* x.

[3] Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

[4] The magnitude of the shift is hard to overstate. Compare the title of Kenneth Scott Latourette's *A History of Christian Missions in China* (Taipei: Cheng-wen, 1929) with that of the modern scholar Ryan Dunch's *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China 1857-1927* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). In Dunch's book, typical of the new direction scholarship has taken, the word "missionary" does not even occur in the table of contents. The focus has shifted from the missionary to the Chinese Christian within his own Chinese context.

[5] Gernet's controversial book *Christianity and the Chinese Impact* sought to explain the failure of Christianity to take root in Chinese soil because of the inherent, unavoidable, and irreconcilable differences between Western Christianity and Chinese culture.

Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* trans. by Janet Lloyd, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985).

[6] David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*, (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2006).

Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Adrian Hastings ed., *A History of World Christianity*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000).

[7] Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan, *Protestantism in Contempory China,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 9.

[8] For example:

Daniel H. Bays, "Indigenous Protestant Churches in China, 1900-1937: A Pentacostal Case Study," *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity,* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

Nicole Constable, *Christian Souls & Chinese Spirits: A Hakka Community in Hong Kong,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of Modern China*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

Alan Richard Sweeten, *Christianity in Rural China : Conflict and Accommodation in Jiangxi Province*, 1860-1900 (Ann Arbor : Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2001).

[9] "中国近代基督教史研究的指导中心，不应单纯聚集于'中国'，而引以

'基督教'作为核心."

邢福增，"近代中国基督教史的研究趋向：回顾与评检" 15 页.

Jean-Paul Wiest voices a similar concern in the introduction to his book, *Maryknoll in China*. He warns that studying missionaries and their work from a purely secular perspective runs the risk of losing sight of the church as primarily an object of faith. Missionaries were not merely the products and in turn the causes of various economic, cultural, political, and social forces, Wiest argues, but rather were also ambassadors of a spiritual kingdom. Thus he advocates that, "Any thorough study on the missionary aspect of the Church should be conducted at two levels, the historical as well as the meta-historical or theological."

Wiest, Jean-Paul, *Maryknoll in China,* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1988), xiv.

[10] For example, while the contribution and work of the foreign missionaries to the establishment of the church cannot be belittled, Jessie G. Lutz has pointed out that according to missionary records, most converts were made by Chinese believers. Many missionaries saw themselves as fulfilling pioneering, equipping, and supporting roles: providing baptism and teaching for new converts, training for local church leaders, and logistical and financial support for ventures in education and health care. Their effectiveness as direct evangelists was hampered by their high turnover rate and language and cultural barriers. Lutz concludes that the mission efforts in China can be seen as a "Sino-foreign enterprise."

Jessie G. Lutz, "China and Protestantism," *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future,* Stephen Uhalley Jr. and Wu Xiaoxin eds. (New York: East Gate Books, 2001), 181.

[11] Daniel H. Bays, "Foreign Missions and Chinese Christians, 1850-1950: Towards Autonomy," Lecture given at Hong Kong Baptist University, May, 1995, 15..

[12] Daniel H. Bays, "Foreign Missions and Indigenous Protestant Leaders in 20th Century China: Chen Chonggui (Marcus Cheng, 1884-1963) and the Issues of Identity and Loyalty in an Age of Nationalism," Position Paper #132 of *Currents in World Christianity Project*, (Cambridge: Currents in World Christianity Project, 2000).

Philip Leung, "The Moses of China: Huang Naishang and the Christian Commune in Sibu," in Leo Suryadinata ed. *Ethnic Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia: A Dialogue between Tradition and Modernity*, (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 2002), 337-352.

Philip Leung, "Christian Fundamentalism in Modern China: Calvin Chao and the 'Chinese For Christ' Movement," in *Jian Dao* (Hong Kong: The Alliance Bible Seminary, 2002, vol.17), 1-20.

Lauren Pfister, "The Proto-martyr of Chinese Protestants: Reconstructing the Story of Ch'ea Kam-Kwong," *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 2004: 187-244.

邢福增，《反帝・愛國・屬靈人: 倪柝聲與基督徒聚會處研究》，(香港: 基督教中國宗教文化研究社, 2005).

邢福增，《中國基要主義者的實踐與困境: 陳崇桂的神學思想與時代》，(香港: 建道神學院, 2001).

邢福增，《尋索基督教的獨特性: 趙紫宸神學論集》(香港: 建道神學院, 2003).

[13] For example, see Paul A. Cohen's "The Littoral and Hinterland," *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang Tao and Reform,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 239-273.

[14] Jessie G. Lutz, *Hakka Chinese Confront Protestant Christianity 1850-1900: With the Autobiographies of Eight Hakka Christians, and Commentary*, (New York: East Gate Books, 1997).

[15] There were a number of reasons for this trend. First of all, early Chinese Christianity was inseparable from and closely identified with the work of foreign missionaries. Second, the missionaries themselves left a very rich collection of publications, journals, letters, and books that were more accessible to western researchers for both linguistic and political reasons than the more scant Chinese primary sources. Third, during the period between 1949 and 1979, there was much speculation that the church in China had been mostly exterminated by the persecutions of Mao Zedong's communist government. It seemed that Christianity had not taken root in China's native soil, and thus the exodus of the missionaries meant the end of Christianity in China. However, as discussed earlier, the revelation in the early 1980s of the existence and revival of a distinctly indigenous Chinese Christianity has instigated a wave of research aimed at analyzing and understanding Christianity in China as an indigenous, not merely a missionary phenomena.

[16] Lutz, *Hakka Chinese*.

[17] Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants*.

[18] Sweeten, *Christianity in Rural China*.

[19] In actual fact, the project had still not really begun by the time I returned a year and a half later. Thus while the assistance of Rev. Zhang, Rev. Wang, and others were indispensable to the project, this work did not become the collaborative venture I had originally envisioned.

[20] These includes some recent written records compiled in the Chinese 地方志 which were often based on personal memories. While church records and even histories were lost in the Cultural Revolution, in some cases the authors of the works are still living, and their memories, either of events that they had witnessed or had studied and written about, often become the basis for these modern accounts. Thus it seems to me that these accounts should be treated as compiled oral histories, instead of written records in the traditional sense.

[21] *China Centenary Mission Conference Records; Report of the Great Conference Held at Shanghai, April 5th to May 8th, 1907.* (New York, American Tract Society, 1907).

F. Rawlinson, Helen Thoburn, and D. MacGillivray eds., *The Chinese Church As Revealed in The National Christian Conference Held in Shanghai, May 2 - May 11, 1922*, (Shanghai: The Oriental Press, 1922).

Milton T. Stauffer ed., *The Christian Occupation of China,* (Shanghai: China Continuation Committee, 1922).

*The Chinese Recorder,* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1912-1938).

[22] Histories of the Baptist Mission Society include:

A.R. Gallimore, *Brief Historical Sketches of Baptist Missions in China, 1836-1936,* (Shanghai: China Baptist Publication Society, 1936).

Basil Amey, *The Unfinished Story: A Study-Guide History of the Baptist Missionary Society,* (London: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1991).

Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992,* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1992).

Britt Towery, *The Pehglai-Pengdu Baptist Memorials: Stories of Baptist Pioneers in Shandong, China,* (Hong Kong: Long Dragon, 1989).

F. Townley Lord, *Achievement : A Short History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1942*, (London: Carey Press, 1942).

H. R. Williamson, H.R., *British Baptists in China 1845-1952,* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press Limited, 1957).

J. B. Myers, J.B. ed. *The Centenary Volume of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1892,* (London: Baptist Missionary Society, 1892).

Ling Oi Ki, *The Changing Role of the British Protestant Missionaries in China, 1945-1952,* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickin, 1999).

*Through Toil and Tribulation: Missionary Experiences in China During the War of 1937-1945; Told by the Missionaries,* (London: Carey Press, 1947).

Autobiographies, biographies, and articles about the Shaanxi missionaries include:

Ernest F. Borst-Smith, *Mandarin & Missionary in Cathay: the Story of Twelve Years' Strenuous Missionary Work During Stirring Times Mainly Spent in Yenanfu, a Prefectural City of Shensi, North China, With a Review of its History from the Earliest Date,* (London: Carey Press, 1917).

George Armstrong Young, *The Living Christ in Modern China,* (London: Carey Press, 1947).

J.C. Keyte, *Andrew Young of Shensi*, (London: Carey Press, 1924).Olive Mary Coats, "Mrs. Moir Duncan: One of the Pioneers," *The Scottish Baptist Magazine,* January 1967, 3-4.

Jessie Duncan, and Doreen Raymer, *Lives Lived of Moir and Jessie Duncan*, (Toronto: WindyRidge Books, 2000).

Moir Duncan, *The Missionary Mail to Faithful Friends and Candid Critics,* (London: Elliot Stock, 1900).

Richard Glover, *Herbert Stanley Jenkins, M.D., F.R.C.S., Medical Missionary, Shensi, China: With Some Notices of the Work of the Baptist Missionary Society in that Country,* (London, Carey Press, 1914).

Articles and Books on the Shaanxi Baptist mission include:

Ernest Whitby Burt, *Fifty Years in China: the story of the Baptists in Shantung, Shansi, and Shensi 1875-1925,* (London: Carey Press, 1925).

William Young Fullerton and C.E. Wilson, *New China: a story of modern travel,* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1910).

[23] The only Chinese history of the Sanyuan church that I know of in existence is Reverend Zhang's short article. 张冠儒：〈三原县中华基督教会见史〉《三原史

资料》，中国政治协商会议陕西省三原县委员会文史资料委员会，第七辑，1990。

An ideologically charged history of the church in Xian was published in 1987. 李因信：《西安市基督教会历史简编》(西安：西安市基督教三自爱国运动委员会印行，1987).

A short history of the Gaoling (高陵) church is provided in this article.

文继忠:〈高陵县中华基督教简史〉《高陵县文史资料》，中国人民政治协商会议陕西省高陵县委员会文史资料委员会编，第十五辑，2005，213-217.

This recently published article introduces the life and work of a significant Sanyuan Christian. 王泽民：〈一代英才 – 王子元〉《山西基督教》，陕西省基督教三自爱国运动委员，第 1 期，4 月 2006，32-33 页.

Chinese Gazetteers (地方志) often dedicate a few paragraphs to the history of religious institutions in each county, including local three-self churches. The following county gazetteers include some records relevant to this project:

《户县志》，户县志编纂委员会编，1987.

《三原县志》，三原县志编纂委员会，陕西人民出版社.

《咸阳市民族宗教志》咸阳市民族宗教事务管理局，西安: 陕西人民出版社, 1997.

《咸阳市志》，咸阳市地方志编纂委员会编，西安：三秦出版社，2000.

《阎良区志》，西安市阎良区地繁殖编纂委员会变，西安：三秦出版社，2001.

张毅辉编，《临潼县志》，陕西省临潼县志编纂委员会，上海：上海人民出版社，1991.

[24] Peter Catterall and Harriet Jones eds., *Understanding Documents and Sources,* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1994), 25.

[25] Mariko Tasano Tamanoi, "A Road to 'A Redeemed Mankind': The Politics of Memory among the Former Japanese Peasant Settlers in Manchuria," *The South Atlantic* Quarterly 99, no. 1 (2000): 4.

[26] Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory and* Trauma, (Ithaca, New York, 1996) 210-212, quoted in Tamanoi, "A Road to a 'Redeemed Mankind,'" 22.

## Chapter 3

## Setting the Stage: The Sanyuan Mission Story

This chapter presents and analyzes the history of the BMS Shaanxi mission as found in mission records, focusing mainly on the period from 1890 through the 1930s. First, this chapter reconstructs a timeline of the events and development of the Shaanxi Baptist mission and church followed by a summary of the missionaries' basic strategies and work as recorded in relevant first-hand missionary records. Second, this chapter will offer some analysis of two pertinent and related issues in Chinese missiology in the context of this specific case study: the issue of missionary identity as reflected in their own writings and the issue of the missionaries' relationship with the Chinese Christians whom they came to serve. The issue of indigenization is also discussed, tracing the missionaries' perspectives on how and when indigenization was achieved in the Sanyuan area churches. It is an attempt to follow Daniel Bays suggestion that scholars studying missiology would embark on "...the dual task of recognizing the missionary contribution while analyzing it objectively."[1] As the focus of this study is primarily on the Chinese Christians of the Sanyuan area, this section provides only a broad overview of BMS mission work, and while it is based on a wide reading of BMS mission sources, it will not provide much detail on individual BMS missionaries, instead summarizing their experiences and offering generalized observations about their roles and relationships within the Chinese church.

Finally, this chapter lays a foundation for the following chapter which turns its focus from the mission and the missionaries onto the church itself and the experiences of

its Chinese participants. As both Chinese and Western influences were important to the establishment and development of the church at Sanyuan, the integration of Chinese and Western sources is essential to this project. However, as this portion of my research is mainly an investigation of Western missionary records, its analysis will be limited to the perspectives these sources supply. This chapter not only furnishes this study with the mission side of the story, but as the majority of sources about the early Sanyuan church are mission records, it also provides much of the historical context necessary to understand the biographical sketches of Chinese Christians presented in the next chapter.

**Historical Background:**

Daniel Bays has perceptively identified three distinct stages in the history of Protestant mission work in China which can fittingly be used as a framework for this examination the development of the BMS mission work in Shaanxi province. First a period of foundation laying and expansion occurred from the 1860s until just after 1900, second a "Golden Age" of mission work occurred lasting until the mid-twenties, and finally foreign missions in China entered a stage of decline leading up to the Communist Revolution, but with the Chinese church enduring.[2] The BMS work in Shaanxi, as the westernmost field they occupied, got a later start than the work elsewhere, but this chronological framework is still basically applicable and will be used in this account, focusing mainly on the first two stages.

**Foundations and Expansion:**

The age of Protestant missions in China really came into full force after the conclusion of the Second Opium War in 1860. The Convention of Peking, signed on October 18, 1860, guaranteed, among other provisions, freedom of religion including the right of missionaries to own property and proselytize. This, along with the right of extraterritoriality and the right of foreigners to travel to inland areas guaranteed by the earlier Treaty of Tianjin created the political conditions necessary to the opening of China to foreign mission work.

Thirty mission agencies quickly took advantage of the opening, sending missionaries to establish work in China. The Baptist Mission Society (BMS), commonly known as the English Baptists, took part in this evangelistic fervor, quickly sending eight missionaries to establish a Baptist presence in Chefoo, (modern Yantai 烟台), Shandong province. This was the first of three fields occupied by BMS missionaries in the foundation building and expansion stage of the BMS mission work.

However, by 1875, sickness, death, and other trials had reduced the BMS missionary force to one lone missionary, Timothy Richard. Richard single-handedly made the decision to move the mission station out of the treaty port to the inland station of Qingzhou (青州). This rebirth in 1875 came to be considered the true beginning of the Baptist's Shandong mission by the missionaries.[3] The next year, Richard was joined by Alfred Jones, Richard's pragmatic, business oriented partner and co-pioneer of the BMS China mission.

Their first major challenge came in the form of the Great Famine of 1876, in which 10-15 million people died of starvation after several years of drought and bad harvests. Richards, Jones, and a few other newcomers quickly organized relief efforts that they estimated saved around 70,000 from starvation in Shandong province. However, the neighboring province of Shanxi was even more seriously effected, and Richards to move his relief efforts to the area surrounding Qingzhou, where he eventually stayed and established the second BMS mission station. The BMS Shandong mission, as the oldest of the three BMS fields, remained the center the BMS work in China, and was described as "the handmaid of all the churches and the nursing-ground of many of their Christian workers."[4]

In 1888, the Shandong mission was expanded to include a station in Zouping County (邹平县), eighty miles west of Qingzhou. This station was also established in response to a natural disaster, this time the flooding of the Yellow river which caused a major famine. BMS famine relief efforts saved thousands, and by 1890, a 146 member congregation had been established in the town.[5]

In fact, most of the expansions of the BMS mission came not as a result of purposeful strategic planning, but instead as the result of natural disasters and circumstances that either created a desperate need for relief in a new area, or forced a section of local church members to uproot themselves and move to a new area.[6]

The mission continued to expand in the following years: new stations were established and new missionaries were added.[7] However, the missionaries and their small congregations faced suspicion and persecution in those early years. Jones

reported that the local population that he lived amongst poisoned his well, threatened to burn down his house, and once even built a wall up over his door, trapping him inside.[8] However, missionaries were aware of the possible implications of their favored political status under the unequal treaties. Missionaries reflected on the question of whether to respond to the hostility with the attitude of "the sermon on the mount," or claiming protection with "treaties wrung from China at the point of a bayonet."[9]

Eighteen ninety two marked the beginning of BMS mission work in Shaanxi province. Shaanxi's population had recently been decimated by four great calamities. About half of Shaanxi's population was wiped out in the rebellions and harsh government suppressions of the Tai Ping Rebellion from 1860 to 1864 and the Muslim Rebellion from 1866 to 1886. Following that, the great famine of 1877-78 and the subsequent brutal wolf attacks by starved wolves descending from the mountains decimated the remaining population.[10] As a result of the severe depopulation, the government adopted a policy encouraging immigration from Shandong, Hebei and Henan provinces.[11] Among the immigrants, about 40,000 made the arduous journey 800 miles from Shandong to Shaanxi in hopes of building a better life there. Among these destitute immigrants were at least 87 Christians from Shandong, including four men trained in a BMS Bible training institute.[12]

The new immigrants faced many challenges. They endured the discrimination and abuse of their native Shaanxi neighbors. The unity of their group was threatened by the presence of the well established Catholic mission in the nearby village of Dongyuan (东塬), which, with its orphanage, industrial work, and "imposing cathedral"

attracted many of the immigrants, especially when relief was offered in times of famine and hardship.[13] In addition, while there were several devout and well-trained church leaders among the group,[14] they were also cut off from the foreign missionary support and care on which they had come to rely. Realizing they needed help, they sent two representatives to the Baptist missionaries in Taiyuan asking that some missionaries be sent to help in the establishment of the church.[15]

After some debate amongst themselves, the Baptists decided to send two veteran missionaries stationed in Taiyuan (太原), Shanxi, to establish a mission presence with the immigrants. However, by the time A.G. Shorrock and Moir Duncan arrived in Gospel Village in 1891, they reported only twenty-nine members left. They began work there by helping to build a church building, and were joined in 1896 by Evan Morgan, who was described as a "well known sinologue."[16]

The hopes of the new immigrants were reflected in the name they gave the first village where around forty of them settled – Gospel Village (福音村). The Christian immigrants were encouraged by the missionaries to establish their own settlement. They chose to build mud huts and establish their own village instead of moving into existing houses in the surrounding mostly depopulated villages.[17] The new settlement of ten families included a meeting house and was governed by mutually agreed upon rules of Christian conduct, including a prohibition against growing and using opium and idol worship. On April 8, 1892, the families dedicated their meeting place and their village to God with a ceremony vowing three things:

1. To recognize Jesus Christ as their Lord.
2. To follow Christ's laws in their new surroundings.

3. To preach Christ's salvation to others.[18]

The Shaanxi work was made difficult by its isolated position. There was no railroad and the nearest train station was an eight day cart ride away. The work began in Gospel Village, but the mission station was later moved to Sanyuan, a larger town nearby and eventually to Xian, which as the ancient national capitol and modern provincial capitol was seen as the strategic center of Shaanxi work.

By 1900, membership in the rural church had reached 256 with a total of 700 in all the Shaanxi BMS churches when a famine forced many of the members to move north. Once again, they took the gospel with them and established a church in Yenan in Shaanbei, and were followed a year later by a missionary, E.F. Borst-Smith, and his wife.[19] In 1914, Dr. and Mrs. Scollay joined the Yenan work as medical missionaries.[20] In 1915, another church building was built in Sanyuan itself, followed by buildings and congregational meeting points established in twenty-four of the surrounding villages. Hospitals and schools followed, as well as a Bible school to train Chinese leaders. A succession of over twenty other foreign missionaries passed through.

However, the work was not without its setbacks. Persecution against the mission stations culminated in the bloody massacres suffered in the Boxer Revolt of 1900. The Boxer Rebellion dealt a costly blow to the nascent church. In the fall of 1899, the first wave of persecution began in Shandong, but the transfer of the anti-foreign official Yu Xian (毓賢) to Shanxi and his replacement by Yuan Shikai (袁世凱), later the first president of Chinese Republic, brought protection for the foreigner

missionaries and allowed them to evacuate in time to escape the danger.[21] Missionaries in Shaanxi were also safely evacuated under the protection of the local government. However, no protection was offered to the foreigners in Shanxi, and all the BMS missionaries stationed there were murdered by the Boxers.

Local Christians, though, weren't protected at all and suffered greatly. One hundred and twenty among the Baptist church in Shandong who refused to recant died, but many more, even pastors, turned their back on their faith temporarily to save their lives. Thousands more were massacred in other areas. Evangelistic work suffered a blow that took time to recover from as many enquirers were scared away.[22]

**Consolidation and Growth:**

Several months later in the spring of 1901, missionaries began to return to their posts, marking the beginning of the second era of their work. This era was marked by the building, consolidation, and indigenization of the local church work.[23] From 1900 to 1925, there was a five fold increase in the number of trained Chinese pastors serving in BMS churches. The work was expanded to new cities and towns. This expansion was increasingly reliant on the trained Chinese evangelists and workers instead of being directly the result of foreign expansion.[24]

In addition, the persecutions of the Boxer Rebellion caused a shift in the strategic emphasis of the foreign mission work. Ties between mission groups and denominations were strengthened as the missionaries endured their exile from their various fields together in Chefoo. As a result, a union was established among them with one of its main goals to foster the cooperation, improvement, and construction of

educational institutions. The missionaries were convinced that their educational efforts must be stepped up in order to combat ignorance, which they judged to be the main cause of the Boxer uprising.[25]

The largest of these joint projects was the establishment of the Shandong Christian University in 1904, an international, interdenominational institute of higher education.[26] The university, a joint project of twelve different missions, was a training ground for Christian leaders. By 1925, it had graduated over one thousand students, ninety percent of whom came from Christian homes and the majority of which went on to serve in some way as "preachers, teachers, doctors, and workers in the YMCA."[27] However, while the church was becoming more indigenous, institutional work, such as the university remained firmly controlled and supported by the foreign missionaries, despite some efforts to include locals.

The 1911 revolution was the next major event to affect the BMS work. Of the three BMS fields, the Shaanxi mission was most threatened by the violence and chaos that resulted from the revolution. The 1911 Revolution threw Shaanxi into chaos, violently disrupting life and work and threatening the lives of foreigners and Chinese alike. Various missionaries got caught in the mayhem, and some were even killed, but most missionaries in the Xian area were eventually helped to reach Xian or another safe area by soldiers or villagers. The Xian hospital and mission residence became a relief and treatment center for the wounded.[28] Manchus were given refuge in missionary houses and schools.

The situation was most serious for missionaries outside of Xian, in the northern areas of the province. Hearing of their peril, in December 1911, an armed expedition

of missionaries set out from Beijing to rescue the stranded missionaries and deliver them safely to Xian.[29] Later, on Jan. 4, 1912, orders came from the British minister in Beijing that all foreigners should evacuate to the coast, and all but four (two doctors and Rev. Shorrock and his wife) of the missionaries decided to leave Xian along with over 100 Chinese.[30] The caravan displayed a flag proclaiming the official order, "Protect Foreigners." Their escape in sub-zero weather even took them across battle lines in which the soldiers actually stopped fighting to let them pass![31] One missionary recalled the traumatic experience:

> That day was one long to be remembered. The party had to pick their way through naked and mutilated corpses, and their relief was unspeakable when they reached their destination, hungry and tired. Even then food for man and beast seemed unobtainable, and it was hours before some coarse rice was obtained from the army. [32]

On January 17, they boarded a train chartered for them to Beijing, completing the two thousand mile "Shensi Relief Expedition."

However, Dr. Andrew Young and Dr. Robinson stayed behind to care for the wounded and give refuge to the persecuted, including the daughter of the notorious Yu Xian, who had ordered the massacre of many missionaries in Shanxi in 1900. Mr. and Mrs. Shorrock also stayed behind, and were able to act as intermediaries and conflict resolvers, preventing violence on several occasions.

Many medically trained Chinese Christians joined the missionaries in ministering to the wounded soldiers and civilians in five improvised hospitals set up in the city in addition to temporary field hospitals set up in the countryside. At one point, city officials, afraid to open the city gates, had to lower ropes over the Xian city wall to

haul a doctor into the city where he could join in the work. At least six-hundred in-patient and many more outpatients were treated.[33] After the dust had settled, their work was recognized and honored by city officials.

During the Republican period, mission work became more urban centered. From the beginning of the work, the missionaries had set their sites on entering and "occupying" major cities as strategic centers. Often, however, they found their way blocked and had to content themselves with settling in small suburbs and towns and conducting rural itinerations. After the suppression of the boxers, however, and treaties and reparation deals worked out with foreign governments opened more cities and towns to foreign residence, missionary work, and trade.

After 1911, industrialization and urbanization increased the importance of urban mission work. Missionaries expanded their efforts to include students and merchants in the cities who were becoming more responsive to their message, instead of limiting their evangelistic efforts mostly to rural farmers. Missionaries took advantage of rising immigration to the cities to reach out to immigrant workers by holding classes, and offering evening recreation activities and Bible studies. The new urban focused strategy was seen as an especially effective means to reach both the expanding urban population and the families of workers, business men, and students back in their home villages.[34]

**Passing the Torch:**

The "Northern Expedition" of 1926-7 brought a new crisis to the Shaanxi mission. Xian was under siege for 196 days, and 30,000 there died of starvation.

Sanyuan was besieged for three months, and the mission hospital there destroyed by bandits. Gospel Village became the scene of fighting in spring and summer for 10 weeks. Fighting in Sanyuan and Gospel Village at times threatened the lives of the missionaries and Christians with them.

In 1929, famine again struck the province, and missionaries in Sanyuan opened a food kitchen which came to feed 1,400 people daily at the height of the crisis, sparing a total of 20,000 from starvation. An orphanage was also opened in Gospel Village under the supervision of Elder Wang, which cared for 400 orphans for two years.[35]

Despite hardships and setbacks, the BMS continued to grow and make progress. By 1925, Shaanxi was home to thirty-one missionaries, 166 Chinese workers, 2,686 church members, 1,270 primary school pupils, 255 boarding school students and close to 200 baptisms a year. Borst-Smith summed up the Shaanxi missions progress, "In spite of revolutions, famines and other disasters, the Shensi work has made steady progress, and the church is on the way to become self-supporting, indigenous and aggressive."[36]

In fact, indigenization was the dominating trend across face of Chinese Christianity during the Republican period. Some BMS converts left to join in the establishment of the Chinese Independent Church in Shaanxi in 1913.[37] In 1925, the BMS mission and local church leadership collaborated to form a United Church Council governing church policies and the use of educational and church funds. Of the twenty-four council members, half were local church leaders and half mission personnel.[38]

In 1933, indigenization reached a new level when the Shensi Baptist Church joined the Church of Christ in China, formed in 1927, formally severing their ties to the

foreign denomination. However, they continued to work closely with the BMS missionaries. In 1937, they sent four representatives to the General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China, two Chinese men, Pastors Wu and Pastor Wang Daosheng (王道生), one Chinese woman, Mrs. Peng, and one BMS missionary, George A. Young.[39] The rising importance and contribution of indigenous church leaders was a trend across the country in this period. In 1934, one of these nationally famous pastors, Wang Mingdao (王明道), had come to Xian and preached for over 3 weeks, making quite an impact on Chinese believers and missionaries alike.[40] Young reflected positively on these developments stating that, "From 1931 onward may be called the final stage, the stage of an independent, self-supporting and self-propagating Church." [41]

However, not all indigenous developments were welcomed by the foreign missionaries. The completion of the railroad as well as the influx of refugees in this period brought some of the new indigenous denominations to Shaanxi, including the Jesus Family (耶稣家庭), the True Jesus Church（真耶稣教会）, and the Spiritual Gifts Society (灵恩会). From the missionaries' perspective these new denominations were a threatening development which was divisive to the local church.[42]

However, while missionaries rejoiced to see a new generation of Chinese leadership arise, they also recognized that their own role in the Chinese church was changing. "The missionaries' function changed from oversight to co-operation. Instead of being a director, he now became an equal partner with his Chinese colleagues in the work. The finest tribute to the work of the pioneers was the Chinese leaders who were now becoming pillars of the Church of Christ in Shensi." [43]

As the church was increasingly locally run, missionaries invested themselves more heavily in institutional work. In 1914, A.G. Shorrock founded a theological school which initially enrolled twenty students, seventeen of whom graduated three years later. A local chapter of the YMCA was started by J.C. Keyte, another BMS missionary, in collaboration with M.C. Neih, a young Christian from Gospel Village who graduated from Yenching University.[44] Medical work, famine relief, and educational work also came to demand more and more of the missionaries' efforts.

World War II brought about some interesting developments in the relationships between the mission and the church. While the rise of nationalism had facilitated growing criticism of a missionary dominated church and spurred on the development of national leadership, World War II united the British missionaries and the Chinese Christians against a common enemy. After Pearl Harbour, all missionaries in Shanxi and Shandong were interned by the Japanese. The missionaries in Shaanxi, however, were still free to continue their work, although plagued with constant threats of violence and bombardment.[45] The suffering of the Chinese people during the war caused many missionaries to abandon their previous commitment to pacifism.[46]

Some BMS missionaries even decided to join the joint Sino-British Force in fighting the Japanese in China, including Dr. J.M. Clow of Xian.[47] However, they did not see their participation in the war as changing their status as missionaries. In fact, they hoped that by showing solidarity with the Chinese people they would be able to make some restitution for past British wrongs against China.[48]

Missionaries serving in the joint force described their position as that of a cultural "rubber buffer" between the British military and the Chinese troops.[49] They

served as trainers, transporters, and translators while still engaging in preaching and evangelism among the troops they served. Their contribution was received gratefully, and they were held in esteem by their Chinese comrades. The missionary-soldiers also used their position to provide supplies and safe conduct to missionaries stationed across China.[50] Chinese Christians also participated in the war effort, increasing the sense of partnership between the foreign mission and Chinese Christian communities.[51]

On April 8, 1942, the church at Gospel Village held a fiftieth anniversary celebration. They rejoiced in the blessings and growth they had witnessed: they had grown from one church with 40 believers and one school of twelve students to 140 churches with 4000 believers and twelve schools with over 3,000 students. On this occasion George Young declared, "The Baptist Mission had become a Chinese Church – independent, self-governing and self-propagating, with over forty pastors and evangelists, sending forth her educated sons and daughters into every realm of society – politics, education, medicine, commerce and industry."[52]

Two years later in 1944, fifty Christians from this immigrant community went on the move once again, this time relocating to the far away province of Xinjiang as a part of a government colonization effort. Missionaries supplied them with scriptures and pamphlets in preparation for their settlement in yet another new mission field.[53] The mission had come full circle.

**Mission Work:**

George Young once tried to answer the question of what exactly missionaries did in China. "The answer is that, in obedience to their King's command and using His methods of teaching, preaching and healing, they are building a Church which will be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating – the Church of Christ in China. That is the task which all missionaries – doctors, teachers, nurses and ministers – are trying to do in China."[54] How this work was implemented in the specific context of the BMS mission in Shaanxi is the topic for discussion below, with special emphasis on the often overlooked Chinese contributions.

The first priority in BMS mission work was always evangelistic. Often, this would begin by distributing literature, especially the catechism and hymns to an enquirer. Missionaries were also eager to secure a premises to use as a preaching hall in which they would hold public meetings.[55] Missionaries also preached publicly in or near market places, using organ music and singing to gather a crowd. Once converts had been made, missionaries dedicated large amounts of time to teaching the new believers, often in nightly classes and weekly chapel services.[56] Evangelistic efforts also took the form of literature creation and distribution.

But mission work was by no means limited to preaching, teaching, and evangelism. Educational work was usually commenced simultaneously with the establishment of a church. Educational work was second only to evangelism in the missionaries' priorities. "As soon as the church was established, the need of Christian schools became urgent. for it nothing were done, an illiterate church would soon melt away, and the children would inevitable drift back into idolatry.... The first care of the

missionaries, therefore, was to provide for the elementary teaching of the children of Christians."[57]

Primitive schoolrooms, sometimes provided by the Chinese Christian community, sometimes in the back of a mission's preaching hall, were used to instruct the students. By 1924, the BMS has established 150 village primary schools with a total of 2,566 students in all three of its China fields.[58]

Later, university preparatory boarding schools were established, the first in Qingzhou, to instruct the best students from recruited from the primary schools. They were instructed in "Chinese History and Literature, in Scripture, Mathematics, Geography, History, Singing, Elementary Science, and Ethics," and later English and science laboratories were added. More important to our story was the establishment of the Gotch-Robinson Training Institute in Qingzhou in 1881 by Whitewright, A.G. Jones, and J. Percy Bruce for the training of church leaders. It graduated its first six students in 1891, and four of its students became a part of the original group of immigrants to Gospel Village.[59]

One of the primary aims of mission educational work was to provide education for the children of Christian families with the hope that future church leaders would be recruited from their ranks. Christian schools' evangelistic purpose was also present but secondary to its recruiting and training purposes. Besides being a training ground for church leadership and Christian workers, Christian schools brought a Christian influence to the universities and intellectual leadership of China.[60] The work was also a multiplying one as many graduates became teachers and went on to establish similar schools in other areas.[61]

Hospitals quickly followed the schools, and while the administration and finances were mostly provided by the missionaries, local managers, nurses, and doctors joined in the work. The Baptists established their first hospital in the province in Xian, the Guanren Hospital (光仁医院). Chinese medical evangelists were even recruited to share the gospel with the patients being treated.[62] The services of mission doctors were in great demand and they were often overwhelmed with the sheer amount of work they had to do, from treating patients to bookkeeping. One of the most important jobs that doctors did was the training of medical assistants and nurses. This process was described by one missionary in Xian:

> Every other assistant had to be "grown." A coolie showing intelligence and character was promoted to ward boy, whilst a ward boy who showed aptitude soon made himself felt and was promoted by the doctor….. It was a sample of the way in which the hospital service was built up; teaching, teaching, and yet again teaching. Every opportunity had to be seized to open the mind, and increase the usefulness of such material as was to hand. As soon as a man had mastered a subject he was set the task of teaching it, as far as he was able, to another man who would subsequently be further drilled and instructed by the doctor himself."[63]

In addition, there was a close relationship between mission schools and hospitals as favored patients became students, sick students became patients, and successful students became hospital staff.[64]

The hospital itself was often a mud-walled building with simple plank board beds.[65] It was almost always full except during Chinese New Year and harvest time, and treated a variety of ailments and conditions from eye maladies and tuberculosis to injuries from battle, accidents, or explosions. Victims of "light bamboo" torture, a military punishment which caused gangrene and required leg amputation, were also

treated. This form of punishment was finally put an end to by the missionaries' fierce protests and refusal to treat any more of its victims.[66]

Medical work was valued as an essential part of mission endeavors, giving a visible and practical presentation of the healing power of the gospel. However, it was a costly enterprise, and financial and personnel resources were stretched thin. While rural missionaries hoped to secure a doctor for their stations, overworked missionary doctors in large cities were often unwilling to send one of their limited personnel to another area. A large donation to the mission allowed for the establishment of two new hospitals in Sanyuan and Yenanfu in 1910 and 1914 respectively, but the latter was subsequently closed because the limited mission resources had been overextended.[67] Personnel resources had been further stretched by loss of two of their veteran doctors to disease, Dr. Jenkins and Dr. Robertson in 1913.[68]

Women's work was another component of missionary efforts. However, it lagged behind the work with men because of the lack of women missionaries in the beginning and because of the seclusion and lack of opportunities given to Chinese women at the time. While single and married men with their wives had been coming as missionaries to China for several decades, it wasn't until 1893 that the first BMS single female missionary arrived in China. As wives and single women actually made up a majority of mission personnel in China after 1880, the BMS seemed to lag behind other missions in this respect.[69]

Opium addiction was a major problem faced by the missionaries, and the establishment of opium refuges often became a part of their regular work. These refuges, which in some cases were merely a small back room attached to a preaching

hall, were missionary supervised, but much of the real work was done by Chinese evangelists and assistants who were the constant companions and supervisors of the addicted.[70] Ideally, a doctor would also be available to treat the patients.

**Missionary Attitudes and Identity:**

In order to understand how missionaries related to their Chinese colleagues, friends, and disciples, it is first necessary to understand how the missionaries constructed their own identity and roles in their cross-cultural context. The way in which missionaries viewed Chinese Christians and Chinese people in general was intimately related to how they viewed themselves. The identity which the missionaries constructed for themselves was marked by the tensions and contradictions inherent in their cross-cultural situation, and was changed over time as the Chinese church developed. On the one hand, pioneer missionaries recognized their insignificant place in the overwhelming scope of Chinese history. Borst-Smith commented on his arrival in Yanan (延安), "Obviously Yenanfu history would not begin with us. How could we expect to make even the smallest stir? Had we not come very late in the day, and were we not the least impressive of its long line of visitors?"[71] However, missionaries who came later were more likely to reflect on the massive growth and influence of Christianity in China's tumultuous process of modernization.

However, even the early "pioneer" missionaries did not usually emphasize their own insignificance. In many way, missionaries considered themselves to be superior men and women engaged in a very important task. Missionaries sought recruits for

this work who were "of ability, education, energy and devout piety... (those) able by nature, education, experience, and grace to lead are the men for China."[72] Alfred Jones of Xian described mission work as at least equally demanding and worthwhile if not more so than that of other respected occupations.

> It is work for men who might make statesmen, generals, and judges of the first order. They will have troubles; so have consuls and generals. They will have storms and dangers; so have admirals. They will require patience; so do judges. Yes we want men who will be stimulated and strengthened by difficulties, not cowed; and it takes good stuff to work on in patience and calm, putting aside all spiritual nervousness, knowing that the battle is the Lord's, and not finding too much fault with ourselves.[73]

Missionaries saw themselves as soldiers fighting in a great spiritual battle under the flag of a holy empire. Battle imagery and imperial metaphors were common among the contemporary mission movement. The title of the famous mission yearbook, *The Christian Occupation of China*, reflects this view, as do the titles of the first and second chapters of E.W. Burt's history of the BMS missionary work in China, "Early Invasions of Christianity," and "The Modern Invasion."[74] Daring and ambitious, missionaries likened themselves to spiritual explorers, pioneers, and colonizers. Burt admonished his fellow workers, "Now, like settlers in some virgin continent who have staked out vast claims, we have to make good those claims, or else relinquish them to others who can effectively occupy them and win them for the Master."[75]

Missionaries also saw themselves as bearers of light in a dark land. Christianity was the light that shone in a land a plagued by dark religious substitutes. Missionaries studied Chinese religious traditions in order to understand and show how Christianity exceeds and defeats them.[76]

Missionaries also saw themselves as bringing the light of western secular education and modern civilization to battle the forces of darkness, backwardness and ignorance that prevailed there.[77] Especially in the face of superstition, prejudice, and violent resistance against Christianity, missionaries believed that education was one of the keys to Chinese national salvation. Thus missionaries renewed and strengthened their emphasis on building educational institutes after experiencing the horrors of the Boxer Rebellion.[78]

Missionaries also defined their own role in China as including the position of a cultural and spiritual ambassador, the two of which were hardly separate in their minds. As missionaries considered themselves to have come from a Christian society and culture, they were proud to represent the best of their cultural background to China. For example, even when evangelistic outreach to the Chinese upper classes failed to make many converts, positive interaction with them was still considered to be constructive. Burt commented, "Yet, even if the results achieved are not all that we could desire, is it not better that this whole class of people should become intelligent admirers of Christianity than that they should remain ignorantly hostile."[79]

Finally, missionaries also often saw themselves fulfilling a diplomatic role between various Chinese groups. BMS missionaries in Shaanxi especially felt caught in the middle between the local Shaanxi population and the immigrant Shandong Christians. The Shandong immigrants did not attempt to assimilate with the local Shaanxi population, preferring instead to enjoy the familiarity and safety of living separately, even to the point of establishing the new Gospel Village as their residence. The missionaries, on the other hand, saw their new mission station as an opportunity to

spread the gospel in a new field, especially among the locals. The movement of the Shaanxi mission headquarters to Xian reflected this concern, and missionaries felt the need to reassure the immigrants that their emphasis on reaching out to the local population did not mean that they would neglect the Shandong flocks. The BMS churches in Shaanxi developed into two streams, with the missionaries in the middle.

The missionaries' role as an intermediary sometimes took a much more concrete form as missionaries found themselves negotiating between warring factions during the 1911 revolution. Several times, missionaries successfully acted as representatives of the city or town in which they lived to plead with a warlord or general to spare their town from destruction and violence.

**Relationship between the Missionaries and Chinese Christians:**

Before the relationship of the missionaries with the Chinese Christians can be discussed, the relationship between the missionaries and the Chinese in general must be touched upon. Theirs was a complicated relationship, full of contradictions and paradoxes. Missionaries disputed their own European counterparts claims that the Chinese were either too inferior for Christianity or that they were so superior so as not to need it.[80] Europeans who criticized the Chinese as "uncivilized" were corrected by the missionary judgment that they were instead "differently civilized." While the Chinese are in one place described as a superior race and as the "colonizers of the world,"[81] in another the same author mocks the Chinese claim to be "infinitely superior" to the West, lacking only in military technology, when he finds them to be lacking in basic moral fiber.[82]

Chinese conservatism and suspicion of foreigners was an obstacle to be overcome in building relationships with them. One missionary compared the cultural barriers between them to the Great Wall of China.

> I can think of no more apt figure than that to express our first difficulty – a wall. China is a land of walls. Happily the walls have gates, usually several. But the wall is there. On the north-west border of Yenanfu, as has already been told, there is the Great Wall of China, one of the wonders of the world. Then around every city and town, as well as many villages, and most homes, is a wall. And this seemed a figure of the lives of the people, around every one of which was a wall of pride and prejudice.[83]

The missionaries' highest praise, however, was reserved for Chinese believers. Joyful in song, ardent in prayer, and zealous in evangelism, these Chinese Christians were described as "citizens of another country."[84] In fact, divine power was regarded as essential to their transformations. Early Chinese leaders were described as surprising candidates for their roles, being variously described as very young, illiterate, eccentric, and even of questionable sanity![85]

The missionaries praised the Chinese believers for their generosity, faithfulness, and zeal,[86] but lamented their comparative lack of education and knowledge. One commented on the status of new believers being baptized, "None of these could have satisfactorily passed an examination in dogmatic theology, but each one gave clear evidence of love and loyalty to the New Master whom they professed themselves willing to follow, even at cost."[87]

These Christians were often willing to make great sacrifices for their faith, which encouraged the missionaries of their genuineness. Commenting on the Boxer martyrs:

> The unshrinking loyalty of these dimly-seeing but deep-loving Christians, mere babes in the faith, living only yesterday in idolatrous darkness,

> should silence for ever those cynical sneers of critics who glibly talk of 'rice Christians.' Those converts could not argue for Christ, but they could and did die for Him. Their faith stood the ultimate test. What more can we ask? Are we worthy of such men and women?[88]

The Chinese believers closest to the missionaries were the evangelists, teachers, medical assistants, and pastors who became their helpers. Chinese helpers were essential both to the daily mission work and to the long term health of the church. Every missionary had at least one local helper, and missionaries would rarely dare to venture to a new field or station without a Chinese co-worker. "Most China missionaries are simply helpless without a reliable Chinese as right-hand man."[89] Missionaries looked for the highest caliber of candidate to be their right-hand men. "Scholarship, statesmanship, eloquence and enthusiasm were amongst the many qualities one wished to find combined in his future helper." [90]

The help of Chinese coworkers was essential for many of the more mundane tasks essential to the running of the mission stations. They helped to secure property, hire employees, manage security and finances, and buy supplies in addition to their work as church leaders, school teachers, medical assistants, translators, and preachers. Daniel Bays credits Chinese workers with doing most of the real work behind the missionaries' accomplishments.[91]

Missionaries credited much of the success of their work to the efforts of these capable coworkers.

> [Church growth] was not entirely of principally because of the foreign missionary. He used what insight he could in choosing Chinese helpers. He sought to initiate, to instruct and inspire; and he hopes that the foundations were well and truly laid. But he was on furlough for the latter half of the time.... Under God, it was due to the faithfulness,

> industry and enthusiasm of the two gifted Chinese helpers who were left in charge.[92]

While missionaries offered praise for their Chinese helpers and their irreplaceable contribution to church and mission work, their role was still understated.[93] However, as the church matured and Chinese believers took a more prominent role in church leadership, missionary writings reflected the growing importance of the Chinese contribution. Earlier missionaries such as Borst-Smith and Burt record only a few names of Chinese helpers and describe some of the Chinese church founders as well meaning but nearly helpless without missionary assistance. Later arriving missionaries like George A. Young, however, described various Chinese church leaders in detail and with the respect afforded to a superior.[94]

Church leaders tended to be succeeded by their children, so that the majority of second and third generation leadership came from Christian homes. This trend has continued to this day, as the descendants of some of the leaders of the original group of Shandong immigrants still hold leadership positions within the church.

Chinese evangelists and preachers were especially held in esteem by missionaries. Borst-Smith described one evangelist's talent for preaching to local crowds:

> This (preaching) is where Mr. Chung is at his best. Not that missionaries cannot preach to the promiscuous crowds that gather round. Some of them can do it very well indeed, and there is no more inspiring task than telling to those who thus come together and listen with open-mouthed wonder the story of the Father who loves them and awaits their return. But at this task the foreign missionary knows that he has his betters.[95]

Often, an evangelistic service would begin with a missionary playing his Bilhorn organ and singing hymns to gather a crowd. Then the Chinese evangelist would take over. Chinese evangelists were innovative in their approaches to evangelism, adapting their methods to the Chinese situation. Borst-Smith described how the preaching would commence.

> Then follows a spectacle to which I wish I could do justice. Mr. Chung gets up, points to some picture, or text, impresses his audience with the fact that they knew al about it already if they only thought deeply enough, or else with the knowledge that for the first time in the long history of their honourable city they now hear a story that is as amazing as it is new, yet as true as it is wonderful. But whether the one or the other, they listen spell-bound. Confucius and all the sages, common sayings and proverbs, manners and customs, seed-time and harvest, flood and drought, business tricks and empty etiquettes – all rush to the aid of this gifted master of assemblies. All serve as grist for his mill. As for the audience, they are at his mercy. They stay with open-mouthed wonder, riveted to the spot, as some of those old Confucian Pharisees begin to feel the badness of the best of them, and some of the tired farm labourers find hope in the goodness of the worst of them, and as both hear how they may find all they need to perfect the one and purge the other in the Holy Love of the Savior.... While the missionary is witnessing this spectacle and glorying in the triumph of his Chinese colleague, he begins to wonder what evil deceiver it was that led him to suppose he could preach.[96]

Chinese evangelists exceeded their western counterparts at preaching as they translated the gospel, not just into the Chinese language, but into the Chinese culture. Missionaries could provide some training for these men, but they had to rely on them in much of their evangelistic efforts. As Jessie Lutz, Daniel Bays and others have noted, the spread of Christianity in China truly was a "Sino-foreign enterprise."[97]

In the beginning of their work in a new area, missionaries tended to take a paternal attitude toward the Chinese church. With "baby" congregations, missionaries felt it necessary to do more daily teaching, preaching, and church work. However, they

eagerly greeted the growing independence and self-sufficiency of the church as it matured. While the missionaries' roles changed as the church developed, they didn't see themselves in danger of working themselves out of a job at any near point in the future. Missionaries eagerly took on more institutional work, both educational and medical, as they moved behind the scenes in church work.[98]

Missionaries looked forward to their replacement by Chinese pastors and church leaders.[99] The recruitment and training of local leaders was a more pressing concern than that of the recruitment of foreign missionaries.[100] Missionaries recognized that for the church to become a permanent fixture in China, it must become thoroughly Chinese: Chinese led, Chinese supported, and Chinese propagated. And while paid helpers and missionary trained evangelists did much to further the work, much of the credit for the establishment and expansion of the church must be given to the efforts of the average Chinese believers and church members who eagerly shared their faith with family and friends.[101] Missionaries hoped that the result would eventually be that they would be unneeded.

As the Chinese church grew in maturity and independence, the missionaries' attitude towards their Chinese brothers and sisters changed. In their eyes, their relationship changed from that of parent and infant, to parent and adolescent, to that of parent and his grown child. However, Daniel Bays has warned against concluding that missionaries and Chinese Christians shared complete equality during this period: "This Sino-Foreign Protestant Establishment looked at times like an equal partnership between missions and Chinese Christians. It wasn't. Foreign missionaries remained in most

of the key power positions.... This was not a conspiracy to retain power, but the natural inertia of established practice."[102]

While the missionaries' attitude towards their Chinese counterparts changed over time, their goals and hopes for the Chinese church remained unchanged. From the beginning, the missionaries' goal had been to see a self-sufficient, indigenous Chinese church established. BMS missionaries, from Timothy Richard onwards, were very influenced by the principles of self-reliance and self-support expounded by John Nevius. Thus BMS missionaries attempted to encourage the development of a self-supporting indigenous church by limiting their financial support for Chinese workers and refusing to subsidize chapels and schoolrooms. However, the costs of medical work and later institutions of higher education were almost entirely supported by the mission budget.

The mission did uphold its policy, however, against paying Chinese evangelists.[103] They found voluntary evangelism to be more effective and a better use of limited resources. The Chinese churches were also forced to be somewhat independent from the beginning by the fact that the number of missionaries was never enough to allow them to personally attend to all the churches on a regular basis. "The work of spreading the gospel fell mainly upon the people themselves, helped by the occasional visit of an evangelist."[104]

By the late 1920s and early thirties, missionaries felt that the torch had effectively been passed and that the Chinese church was no longer an extension of a foreign mission, but instead a self-governing, self-supporting, and self propagating Chinese church. BMS missionaries in Shaanxi, as missionaries across China, acted as catalysts, builders, and sustainers of the Christian church in China. However, they did

none of this alone. The work of Chinese believers was essential as every stage of mission work, and they even came to replace missionaries as the primary teachers, pastors, evangelists, and leaders in the church. Missionaries saw their role changing from that of laying foundations to that of supporting the local church. The next chapter will examine the lives and work of some of these important Chinese Christians. In the last chapter, these missionaries' perspectives will be reevaluated in light of the stories of the Chinese Christian leaders they had worked alongside.

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1 Daniel H. Bays, "Foreign Missions and Chinese Christians, 1850-1950: Towards Autonomy," Lecture given at Hong Kong Baptist University, May, 1995, 15.

2 Bays, "Foreign Missions and Chinese Christians," 2.

3 Ernest Whitby Burt, *Fifty Years in China: the story of the Baptists in Shantung, Shansi,and Shensi 1875-1925,* (London: Carey Press, 1925), 18.

4 Ibid., 22.

5 Ibid., 36.

6 Burt described the situation as follows: "A bad harvest, a plague of locusts, a hail-storm, a blight, a flood or a drought – any one of these calamities may reduce them to the verge of starvation, and many of the most virile inhabitants have perforce to seek new homes in distant Manchuria or Shensi. It was, in fact, one of these bitter treks of Shantung *émigrés* that led to the founding or our Shensi Mission more than thirty years ago, and there has been more than one exodus since. These migrations have thinned the ranks of our church, but like the dispersals of the early Christians at the death of Stephen, have spread the gospel far and wide." Ibid., p. 65. "Neither of these missions owes its origin to deliberate policy initiated in the councils of the Mission House in London. Events challenged the faith of the men on the spot, and, greatly daring, they were not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Ibid., 106.

7 Ibid, 27.

8 Ibid., 28.

9 Ibid., 28.

10 Ibid., 102-3

11 Ibid., 104.

12 Ibid., 105.

13 J.C. Keyte, *Andrew Young of Shensi,* (London: Carey Press, 1924), 126.

14 张冠儒 lists 孙汉卿，刘丹之，聂鸿儒，王源，孙香圃 as well-educated men among the original immigrant group who became important church leaders.

张冠儒：〈三原县中华基督教会见史〉《三原史资料》，中国政治协商会议陕西省三原县委员会文史资料委员会，第七辑，1990。

Stanley records that four among the immigrants were church leaders trained in the Baptist Mission Society's "Whitewright's Native Training Institution" in Shandong.

Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992,* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992).

[15] 张冠儒：〈三原县中华基督教会见史〉《三原史资料》，50.

[16] Keyte, *Andrew Young of Shensi,* 124.

Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society,* 199.

[17] Richard Glover described the situation that the Moir Duncan and A.G. Shorrock found the immigrant Christians in upon their arrival: "They found the Shantung people chiefly quartered in a district by themselves, and encouraged the converts from Shantung to constitute themselves into a village of their own – Fu-yin-tsun, "Gospel Village" – on the north of the River Wei. They could have had, not merely farms, but empty houses, where they could have lived rent-free; but the caution of strangers led the colonists generally to build mud huts for themselves in order to maintain their independence. The Christian colonists had an additional reason in the fact that, dwelling apart, no demand for temple of theatrical taxes would be made on them, and no resentment roused by their refusing to join them in their worship or their play. In the "Gospel Village," a by-law of which forbade to every resident the growing or the sale of the use of opium, they began their labours, gradually extending their work to San Yuan on the south, and other adjoining towns and villages."

Richard Glover, *Herbert Stanley Jenkins, M.D., F.R.C.S., Medical Missionary, Shensi, China:With Some Notices of the Work of the Baptist Missionary Society in that Country,* (London: Carey Press, 1914), 28.

[18] George A. Young, *The Living Christ in Modern China,* (London: Carey Press, 1947), 98.

[19] Ernest F. Borst-Smith, *Mandarin & Missionary in Cathay: the Story of Twelve Years' Strenuous Missionary Work During Stirring Times Mainly Spent in Yenanfu, a Prefectural City of Shensi, North China, With a Review of its History from theEarliest Date,* (London: Carey Press, 1917), 59.

[20] Borst-Smith, 83.

[21] Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 49.

[22] Ibid., 50.

[23] "For the past quarter of a century the work has gone on being consolidated. The church has become self-supporting, with some twenty-five pastors of its own and a Shantung Baptist Union, managing its own affairs. The slow but sure progress of many years is here condensed into a sentence. The centre of gravity has gradually shifted from the foreign mission to the Chinese church. The missionary is still needed for counsel and inspiration, but he no longer interferes directly in matters of church order and government nor in the administration of rites and sacraments. He is content, nay, he rejoices, to see the child reach adolescence and begin to assert independent life of its own."

Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 60.

[24] Ibid., 61.

[25] Ibid., 53-54.
[26] Ibid., 55.
[27] Ibid., 58.
[28] H.R. Williamson, *British Baptists in China 1845-1952.* London: Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd., 1957, 86.
[29] Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 88.
[30] Ibid., 88.
[31] Ibid., 89.
[32] Ibid., 89.
[33] Ibid., 86.
[34] -"This reflex influence of the city on the country is tremendously important in China, where, while thousands of men are necessarily herded in towns for business purposes, it is the custom to leave the family in the ancestral village home. Hence one of the great needs of the day is to develop the city, as distinct from the country, work. The church is still almost wholly a rural church. It taxes its strength to support the pastorate and the village school and evangelise the surrounding villages. The country districts have supplied us with our best trained men. But for some time to come the task of evangelizing the great cities is manifestly beyond the limited resources of the rural church. During the next decade the Mission ought to concentrate upon a campaign in the cities and towns which God has now so surprisingly opened to us.... The door is wide open. Wherever neighboring missions have had the foresight to pursue this plan, they have had cheering results; and we as a mission should equally succeed, and in a few years have the joy of seeing thriving city churches established in the cities, which in their turn would be able to help the scattered village churches." Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 69-70.
[35] Ibid., 64.
[36] Ibid., 118.
[37] Keyte, *Andrew Young of Shensi,* 127, and Young, *The Living Christ,* 103.
[38] Young, *The Living Christ,* 104.
[39] Ibid., 106.
[40] Ibid., 84.
[41] Ibid., 106.
[42] Ibid., 85-6.
[43] Ibid., 103.
[44] Ibid., 103.
[45] *Through Toil and Tribulation: Missionary Experiences in China During the War of 1937-1945, Told by the Missionaries,* (London: Carey Press), 1947, 8.
[46] One missionary described his attitude as changing from that of "Peace at Any Cost," to "Righteousness at any Cost."

W.S. Upchurch, "The Christian Commandos: The Continuing Ministry of Reconciliation in Time of War, 1942-1946," *Through Toil and Tribulation: Missionary Experiences in China During the War of 1937-1945, Told by the Missionaries,* (London: Carey Press, 1947) 133.
[47] Ibid., 134.

[48] "It was also seen, not as a ceasing from missionary effort in China, but as the opening of a door to a larger sphere of service for China too, in that the British have yet a long way to go in reconciliation with their Chinese fellow-citizens of this world, by undoing some of the terrible wrongs inflicted by us in the past, and in repaying by love and service, the debts we owe. For after all, mutual understanding in the political and international sphere has an inspiring effect on Christian work in any country." Upchurch, *Through Toil and Tribulation,* 134.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 137.

[51] W.S. Upchurch reflected on his experience serving with Chinese Christians in the war, "We no longer stand in the relation of mother and daughter, but as sisters who have graduated from the same school of testing. Soon we hope to become partners in God's vineyard. The wheel is turning full circle." Ibid., 143.

[52] Young, *The Living Christ,* 112.

[53] Ibid., 113.

[54] Young, *The Living Christ,* 96.

[55] Borst-Smith, *Mandarin and Missionary,* 65-66.

[56] Borst-Smith, *Mandarin and Missionary,* 96-7.

[57] Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 37.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 38, and Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society..*

[60] Glover, *Herbert Stanley Jenkins,* 65.

[61] Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 38.

[62] Ibid., 40.

[63] Keyte, *Andrew Young of Shensi,* 169.

[64] Ibid., 193.

[65] Ibid., 171.

[66] Ibid., 182-4.

[67] Ibid., 191.

[68] Ibid., 191.

[69] Bays, "Foreign Missions and Chinese Christians," 4.

[70] Borst-Smith, *Mandarin and Missionary,* 84-85.

[71] Borst-Smith, *Mandarin and Missionary,* 66.

[72] Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 27.

[73] Ibid., 41-42.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 105.

[76] "But not Confucianism, which is a practical atheism, not Taoism with its deified men, nor Buddhism with its mysterious Buddhas – not one of these could teach the Chinese such an idea as that man was made to enjoy God and glorify His name. To enjoy an idol! To glorify an image of clay! The very idea is preposterous. Confucius says, 'Do right, that you may respect yourself and be respected by others.' 'Do right, that you may grow famous and have many sons,' says Taoism. 'Do right,

because there's a hell where you will be punished if you don't,' says Buddhism. 'Do right, that you may glorify your Maker' – this is reserved for Christianity to say. It is impossible for those who have not studied the three religions of China to appreciate the deadly blows that are given them by every sentence in the Catechism." Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 46.

[77] Borst-Smith interestingly compared the relationship between mission work and modernization to the close relationship between the mission stations and the newly established imperial postal system. He recalled, "I have often been applied to for positions in the post office. And the reason is probably that they have much in common; both preacher and postman stand for progress; both have come from outside the city walls; the influence of both is inconsistent with narrowness and ignorance; neither permits self-centeredness. And if the postman belongs to the "Ministry of Communications," does not also the preacher?" Borst-Smith, *Mandarin and Missionary,* 163.

[78] For example, Burt commented, "Every thoughtful man knows that the horrors of 1900 were only possible because of the dense ignorance of both officials and people, and the new University has doubtless done much to remove ignorance and misunderstanding." Burt, *British Baptist,* 96.

[79] Burt, *British Baptist,* 110.

[80] Ibid., 47-8.

[81] Ibid., 135.

[82] Ibid., 47-8.

[83] Borst-Smith, *Missionary and Mandarin,* 71.

[84] Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 30-31.

[85] Ibid., 32.

[86] "One of the most promising signs of the Yenanfu Christians is the sense of responsibility that marks them. There were then three out-stations. In only one of these were there baptized members, but every one of the out-stations sent contributions. And liberality is admittedly not a heathen virtue.... The term 'rice Christian' is accurate of them, as well as picturesque, but they *give* the rice. And on this occasion some, too poor to give either cash, flour or rice, gave firewood. That Christianity means giving is installed into their minds from the first. The united contributions at these meetings reached £8, 10s., and this is one of the very poorest districts in the whole of China. What is involved in that sum, from those people, can never be fully felt by European or American readers. It means, among other things, this: that this church gathered in three years from heathenism already raised enough to support its own pastor, if it chose to adopt that form of expenditure." Borst-Smith, *Missionary and Mandarin,* 131.

[87] Ibid., 130.

[88] Burt., *Fifty Years in China,* 88.

[89] Borst-Smith, *Missionary and Mandarin,* 136.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Bays, "Foreign Missions and Chinese Christians," 6.

[92] Borst-Smith, *Missionary and Mandarin,* 132.

[93] Bays observed this phenomenon to be widespread among the mission community: "Mission records seriously understate the Chinese role, and often don't even have the names of Chinese participants, but they were there.... Yet all in all, the Chinese part of the joint Christian enterprise was invisible until the early 1900s. Foreign missionaries remained in charge of everything, with little sense of real partnership with Chinese—as shown by the near-absence of Chinese at the Centennial Conference of 1907." Bays, "Foreign Missions and Chinese Christians," 6-7.

[94] Young, *The Living Christ,* 110.

[95] Borst-Smith, *Missionary and Mandarin,* 138.

[96] Ibid., 139-140.

[97] Daniel H. Bays, "Foreign Missions and Indigenous Protestant Leaders in 20th Century China: Chen Chonggui (Marcus Cheng, 1884-1963) and the Issues of Identity and Loyalty in an Age of Nationalism," *Currents in World Christianity Project,* Position Paper No. 132, Sept, 2000, 1.

Jessie G. Lutz, "China and Protestantism." In *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future.* Stephen Uhalley Jr. and Xiaoxin Wu eds. (New York: East Gate Books, 2001), 181.

[98] Until pastors had been trained and appointed, the missionary had to be both evangelist and pastor, preaching at fairs and markets and by the wayside, examining and baptizing candidates, administering the Communion, and like a father with his children, having to settle a thousand and one little affairs for the people, and teach them line upon line, and step by step. Gradually most of these functions have devolved upon the Chinese pastor, and the missionary is set free to carry the Gospel to new areas, to evangelize the cities, and above all, by means of Bible classes, to raise the standard of Christian knowledge among the rank and file of the church, which is still too largely an illiterate community. Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 62-63.

[99] "The Chinese Church of the future (and not very distant future) will be taught and led by Chinamen. That is sound doctrine and sure prophecy. But better still: we already know some of the men who are worthy to take their part." Borst-Smith, *Mandarin and Missionary,* 133.

[100] However pressing may be the need for foreign reinforcements, it is not nearly so vital as the discovery and training of leaders belonging to the country itself. The foreign missionary must decrease, the Chinese leader must increase, or the Church in the mission field has no future." Borst-Smith, *Mandarin and Missionary,* 134.

[101] One missionary described the way in which the gospel was typically spread:

"Stations are springing up and adherents are multiplying at a rate out of all proportion to the foreign influence brought to bear on the work. That one fact is precious, almost above every other. How is it done? By me? No. By paid helpers? No. By office-bearers of the church? No, in no way. It is just this. So-and-so in such a village had friends in the adjoining county and persuaded them. Such a man had wife's relations in the next village. They wanted books and teaching. This man keeps a shop twenty miles away from his native village, and when he goes home, he exhorts his friends, of course. The leader at another village wants to collect some accounts at the end of the year in a place where the Gospel has never been preached; and

it is accepted when he opens his mouth. A doctor at another place is always hearing about the doctrine, must needs see the books, and becomes a convert. Somebody, a poor man, blind of one eye, persuades the catechist to go with him to a certain place, and a number of people believe and worship. A teacher, who had always misunderstood Christianity as a bad, shallow, nonsensical system, finds that politically it leads and controls what is in effect the world, and, seeing on of Ricci's books, is delighted with the depth and solidity of the argument, and opens his house for Christian worship. Time would fail to tell of the men whom the meshes of the Gospel are reaching...." *Burt, Fifty Years in China,* 42-3.

"From the first, there were many evidences of the self-propagating power of the Gospel. Many of the Christians engaged in voluntary preaching..." Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 34.

[102] Bays, Daniel H., "Foreign Missions and Chinese Christians," 10.

[103] Burt, *Fifty Years in China,* 44.

[104] Ibid., 35.

## Chapter 4
## Meeting the Chinese Church: Sanyuan Christians Up Close

This chapter presents the biographical sketches of 22 significant Chinese church leaders and lay people of the Sanyuan area churches constructed from the information found in missionary records, county gazetteers, and interviews. Except in direct quotations, all names have been adjusted to the standardized Chinese Pinyin system of spelling, followed by the Chinese characters in parentheses.

These biographical sketches of these figures are organized into five categories based on their chronological and geographical appearance. The first section, "The Founders," recounts the lives of seven of the first pastors and elders of the immigrant churches, and in two cases also includes a second generation leader. The second section, "Revival Village: the Guo Family Story," tells the story of another immigrant founded Christian village, not often mentioned in missionary records. The third section, "Right Hand Men," focuses on three Xian Christians who worked closely with BMS missionaries who worked in both the Sanyuan and Xian areas. Although they were not associated with the Sanyuan area churches, the unusually detailed descriptions of them in mission records allow us a glimpse into the workings of the missionary-Chinese relationship. The fourth section, "The Second Wave: The Church Unleashed," recounts the experiences of five men who saw the church enter a new era of Chinese history. As revolution and war wracked the country, a second wave of refugee immigrants arrived in Shaanxi, bringing with them new religious sects, new political ideas, and new religious experiences. The lives of these five men, as well as four others from previous sections who also lived during this period, illustrate the response of the church in that volatile time. The last

section, "Christian Women: Untold Stories," touches on the lives of three Christian women whose stories typify the experience of thousands of women in the Chinese church. Through these Christians' stories, a fuller picture of Shaanxi church history begins to emerge.

## I. The Founders

### (Sun Hanqing, Liu Danzhi, Sun Xiangpu, Wangyuan & Wang Lingde, Elder Wang & Wang Daosheng)

Pastor Sun Hanqing (孙汉情)

As the founding pastor of the first church founded by the Shandong immigrant community at Gospel Village, Pastor Sun Hanqing (孙汉情) is the most significant figure described at some length by various missionaries who knew him. Pastor Sun was trained in the BMS Whitewright's Training School in Shandong and was one of the first graduates from that institute. He was ordained in 1891 and the next year he joined the group of around forty Christians who decided to immigrate to Shaanxi. He served the church in Shaanxi for forty years, first as the founding pastor of the Gospel Village church, and eventually as the supervising pastor over a network of twenty village churches.

Pastor Sun was converted as young man and little was recorded about his pre-Christian life. However, more than one missionary referred to him as a "litigious evil-doer" prior to conversion.[1] Moir Duncan described him, "Mr. Sun was once a litigious evil doer. He wished to join the church, with the hope of screening his life and escaping the law. The Gospel changed his heart and habits, ideas, and life…."

Joseph W. Esherick has documented the attraction that the mission related church held in Shandong because of the protection they could afford their members from government persecution. In Shandong, both sectarians and bandits were known for seeking protection from arrest by converting to Christianity in the late nineteenth century.[2] Pastor Sun was obviously one of these cases, although it is unclear whether he was a sectarian fleeing government persecution or a bandit seeking protection from the law. However, the missionary descriptions seem to favor the latter.

While Esherick questions the genuineness of these conversions, Sun Hanqing's story definitely confirms that at least some of these converts were truly transformed by their experience with Christianity, no matter what their original motivations were for joining the church. George Young, who knew Pastor Sun only in his later years commented, "In the early days he had been a litigious evil-doer, but the Gospel had changed his heart and habits, and transformed him into a man of John-like characteristics – spiritual, refined, peace-loving, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. He had rendered magnificent service to the Church by all his flock. It was a rare privilege for me to work under his direction."

Pastor Sun, as the patriarch of the Shaanxi Baptist church, seemed to become an almost legendary figure. One story recorded by Moir Duncan about him is as follows. Pastor Sun was falsely accused by some neighbors of stealing four trees for lumber. When it was revealed that the accusers were in the wrong, he refused to demand any compensation in spite of the protests of the other villagers. Duncan records, "His reply was: 'Years ago I would have made gain of a like affair, but now I must obey the law of Christ. That you may know that I am a Christian, I forgive these men.'" The result of the incident was that his accusers were so impressed that

they not only apologized but also made a donation towards the building of the chapel building in Gospel Village.[3]

Pastor Sun was also known for his promotion of education, both for children and church leaders. He promoted the development of schools for boys and girls and held classes for church leaders and evangelists. He himself was an amateur scholar. Burt describes him: "Although he was not clever, he became wonderfully familiar with the Scriptures." He wrote a commentary on John, which while never published, was zealously hand-copied by his students.[4] Unfortunately, it seems that all of these copies have been lost.

The missionaries especially appreciated Pastor Sun's loyalty, both to the church and to the denomination. One referred to him as a "Baptist Stalwart." Over the years, as the church in China faced various challenges, especially because of its connection with foreign missionaries, Pastor Sun stood resolute in defense of the church and its foreign associations. He was especially credited with averting much destruction and loss of life during the 1926-1929 anti-Christian movement. When faced with the immanent arrival of Communist rioters, Pastor Sun evacuated the primary school and stayed in the school building alone to await them. When they arrived, "His quiet dignity overawed many of the rioters, and on his expostulating with them, he shamed them into doing nothing more than burning all the books they could get hold of, and leaving the building in tact."

When the missionaries were forced to flee the province in 1927 during the height of the anti-Christian movement, the Xian church turned against the missionaries and seized all church and mission property. However, Pastor Sun was said to have scorned their actions and was influential in the northern rural churches' loyalty to the BMS missionaries during their forced absence. However, differences

in the political climate in the urban and rural areas surely also played a part in their different reactions. In any case, it was these acts of bravery and loyalty that earned him an official letter of appreciation from the BMS London office. Interviews turned up little new information about this early church leader, except the fact that after his death in 1934 a stone tablet was erected in his honor in Gospel Village, which, unfortunately has been destroyed in recent years.

Pastor Liu Danzhi (刘丹芝)

While many of the Shandong immigrants remained loyal to the BMS, not all did. Liu Danzhi, listed as one of the five founding fathers of the immigrant churches by Zhang Guanru, left the BMS fold for the Seventh-day Adventists, helping to establish the first SDA churches in the Sanyuan area.[5]

Liu Danzhi was mentioned in a county gazetteer as one of the "poor seminary students" that accompanied the first group of Christian immigrants from Shandong.[6] Soon after arriving, however, he was among the first three Chinese appointed to a position of church leadership by the missionaries, along with Pastor Sun Hanqing and Elder Wang Yuan.[7] Liu was appointed a pastor and began his work serving in the BMS church of Gospel Village. However, in 1915, he met Wu Yanxiang (吴延相), from Henan who was affiliated with the Seventh Day Adventist Church of Shanghai. Liu invited Wu to preach his message in Sanyuan and Gospel Village. The next year, Liu sent an associate, Tan Chuanwen (谭传温) to Henan to invite the SDA foreign missionaries there to come to Shaanxi and establish a church. The SDA sent two American missionaries who helped to establish churches and schools in Gospel Village and in Tan's home in Xianliang district (阎良区). The church grew quickly, and expanded to other cities and towns culminating in the

establishment of a SDA Shaanxi mission headquarters in Xian in 1928.[8]

Although he did leave the Baptist church and reportedly had rocky relations with the foreign missionaries, he was able to maintain relationships with his former colleagues. When the Chinese churches started to move for more independence from the foreign missions, denominational differences became less important. Liu cooperated with Sun Hanqing and Sun Xiangpu to initiate the independence movement in the 1930s. He also collaborated with church leaders from other denominational backgrounds, including Shaanxi natives, to establish the Independent Church of Xian, which came to be pastored by Zhang Ziyi (张子宜) of Xingping (兴平).[9] Liu Danzhi had at least one son, Liu Chuanjing (刘传经).

Pastor Sun Xiangpu (孙香圃)

Sun Xiangpu was another founding father of the Shandong immigrant churches. Sun was listed by Zhang Guanru as one of the church leaders that came with the first group of Shandong immigrants to Shaanxi.[10] Zhang also reported in an interview that Sun first settled with some missionaries in Ronghe Village (荣和村), which was originally a Swedish CIM base, but was later handed over to the BMS.[11] Sun later returned to Sanyuan to become the first pastor of Sanyuan's central church, the Save the World Church (救世堂)，which he pastored from 1915 to 1935.[12]

In 1930, Pastor Sun cooperated with Liu Danzhi and others to advance the indigenous church movement which resulted in the establishment of the Independent Chinese Church of Xian. During the anti-Japanese war, he supported the Communist Party's "Resist Japan Movement" by representing the church at party meetings.[13]

Pastor Sun was also known for his enthusiastic support of education projects.

He was the principal of the BMS Chongde (崇德) Middle School in Sanyuan, as well as the Zhenguo (振国) Christian schools established by Wang Ziyuan (王子元) in 1939. He also initiated literacy classes in the local Bible schools.[14]

Sun's Christian service also extended to efforts to help famine victims, including work with a soup kitchen and an orphanage. He was also twice the treasurer of the Chinese-Foreign Relief Agency in Shaanxi.[15] But as many Chinese and foreigners were coming to realize at this time, famine relief could only treat the symptoms and could never get at the root of China's frequent famine crises. Sun, along with many others of his time, began to look to participate in long term solutions. In that vein, in 1931, the Chinese Foreign Relief Agency of Shanghai (华洋赈济会) entrusted Sun Xiangpu, along with an American irrigation expert and a government irrigation expert with the responsibility to begin the Jing-Wei Rivers irrigation project.[16]

Besides his service to the church and society, Sun Xiangpu also served history. His meticulously kept journals of the events that occurred each year, both in the country as a whole and in the church, became the basis for Zhang Guanru's own history of the Sanyuan church's history written several decades ago. Unfortunately, both Zhang's history and Sun's journals were lost in the Cultural Revolution.[17]

Wang Yuan and Wang Lingde (王源，王灵德)

Wang Yuan（王源）was listed as one of the five founding fathers by Zhang Guanru. However, records and interviews could turn up little information about him, besides the fact that he helped to establish the church and schools at Gospel Village. Wang Yuan had at least two sons, Wang Tiaosheng (王苕生) and Wang

Kewen (王科文). Wang Kewen's son, Wang Lingde (王灵德) was briefly mentioned by name by George Young as a schoolmaster in Gospel Village who was loyal to the missionaries during their 1927 absence. His granddaughter, Rev. Wang Hong (王红), was able to fill me in on a few more details of his life.

Wang Lingde was a well educated man, graduating from Cheeloo University and Yanjing University where he studied biology before moving to Qinghai. He later returned to Xian, and eventually to Gospel Village where he became the principal of the BMS founded Chongmei Middle School (崇美中学) and an elder of the village church. He also came to preside over the Northern Wei district of churches. In addition, he worked with Wang Ziyuan (王子元) to establish the Northwest Agricultural College and the Zhenguo schools (振国中小学).[18]

Ironically, it was partially his involvement with the Chongmei Middle School that was used to bring charges against him in the Cultural Revolution. The school's name, Chongmei (崇美), means "Honor Beauty", but it was taken by the red guards to mean "Worship American Imperialism". In August of 1966, he, along with several other local pastors, were sentenced to serve fifteen years in prison. However, shortly thereafter he had a stroke which left him partially paralyzed and he was allowed to go home before the end of the year. He died at home in 1971. He was survived by his four sons, one daughter, and his younger sister who immigrated later and lived in both the US and Taiwan.

Elder Wang and Pastor Wang Daosheng (王道生):

Elder Wang, also known as Deacon Wang, was a prominent church leader mentioned a few times by various missionaries. However, more is recorded about his son, Pastor Wang Daosheng, who surpassed him in position and influence.

Elder Wang was one of the Shandong immigrants, not to be confused with Wang Yuan (王源), who was recorded as one of the church leaders who came with the original immigrant group from Shandong.[19,20] Elder Wang served as head over a village church in Renhe (仁和) just two villages east of Gospel Village.[21]

Elder Wang was noted for the Christian atmosphere of his home, and indeed he was very committed to seeing his son receive a Christian education, both in the home and at school.[22] He sent his son, Wang Daosheng, to the boy's school in Gospel village to begin his education. Wang Daosheng continued his education at the Bible School in Xian, followed by studies at the Bible school in Sanyuan from 1928-1931, and finally at the North China Theological College in Shandong.

When he returned, he was appointed an evangelist and eventually pastor of the Central district supervising the 24 churches in the Sanyuan area. The Yanliang and Lintong gazetteers reports that Wang Daosheng was appointed by A.G. Shorrock as the pastor of the Renhe church where his father served.[23] Wang Daosheng also held the post of secretary to the Shaanxi District Synod, as well as serving as one of four representatives for the Shaanxi churches at the national Chinese Christian Council meeting in 1937.[24]

It was either Wang Daosheng or more probably his father who also headed up a project to create and maintain an orphanage in the Gospel Village school which cared for four hundred orphans of the famine of 1929-31.[25]

Elder Wang was another of the church leaders lauded by missionaries for his loyalty and level-headedness during the persecutions of the 1920s.[26] His son was similarly praised for his level-headedness in facing the challenge of an influx of the new sects such as the Jesus Family (耶稣家庭), the True Jesus Church (真耶稣教会), and the Spiritual Gifts Society (灵恩会).[27] "He has rendered conspicuous

service to the Church by his sane spiritual teaching and consecrated living. Amidst the ebb and flow of emotionalism and heresy he has remained steadfast, immovable, busily occupied at all times in the Lord's work."[28]

Pastor Wang Daosheng was an important leader during the difficult transition of becoming a Three-Self Patriotic church after the communist victory in 1949. In a letter dated April 18, 1951 to the BMS China secretary Rev. H.W. Spillet, Pastor Wang expressed the church's gratitude for the past financial support of the BMS but at the same time affirmed their desire to be self-sufficient from then on. He wrote, "Now that our Church is able to go firmly forward on the path of self-support, we wish to express our sincere gratitude to all our brothers and sisters in the older churches. Our desire is for the maintenance and permanence of the Christian fellowship between us."[29]

Although several interviewees knew of Wang Daosheng, they were unable to give me much new information about either him or his father. Reverend Wang Hong did remember that Wang Daosheng also served for a time as the pastor of the Gospel Village church and he had a well known younger brother, Wang Yong Sheng (王永生).[30]

Several observations can be made about the above "founders," especially in respect to their relationship with foreign missionaries. First, they all worked closely with missionaries and their main concerns and work closely mirrors that of the missionaries. Like the missionaries, the founders' priorities were evangelism and church work followed closely by education initiatives and then including some relief and development work. This is not surprising considering the fact that the immigrants Christians came from mission supported churches in Shandong, were

educated in mission schools and seminaries, and many were first generation Christians who may have been converted by missionaries. So it was soon after their arrival in Shaanxi that these Christians sent a letter back to Shandong asking for missionary support and inviting them to join them in Shaanxi.

Thus their close relationship with the missionaries resulted in their sharing of similar concerns, values, and priorities. Like the missionaries, the founders viewed Christian education as a vitally important endeavor. The founders were either educated in, or educated their children in church schools and several were involved in teaching and administrative positions in these schools. Sun Hanqing was educated in Shandong BMS Bible school, Liu Danzhi was a former seminary student, and Sun Xiangpu probably had some seminary training since he was appointed as a pastor. Elder Wang sent his son to missionary schools and seminaries. Later leaders, such as Wang Lingde also received advanced degrees from universities and worked to establish schools themselves, as well as working in the schools originally associated with the mission. Sun Xiangpu initiated literacy classes and served as the principal both of a BMS mission school and an indigenous Christian school.

Later, relief and development work became an area in which these church leaders sought to collaborate with the missionaries. Elder Wang worked with the missionaries to run a program to care for famine orphans in Gospel Village. Pastor Sun Xiangpu served with the Chinese Foreign Relief Agency in administering famine relief and was a key player in the development and implementation of the Jing-Wei River irrigation project which sought to provide a remedy for the frequent drought induced famines which plagued the region.

While their concerns and work closely mirrored that of the foreign missionaries, the missionaries themselves were keenly aware of the fact that the founders did not

always display loyalty or deference to the mission. Missionaries defined loyalty to the mission in two respects: opposition to nationalistic and anti-foreign forces which attacked anything with foreign ties and opposition to religious movements with unapproved theology. In other words, loyalty to the mission was defined as opposition to both external (anti-foreign) and internal (denominational) threats.

It is interesting to consider the cases of Sun Hanqing and Liu Danzhi as an illustration. For the former, loyalty to the mission did not necessarily reflect a situation of the weak depending on the strong. It often meant that he had to defend the church's close relationship with foreign missionaries by standing alone in the face of danger and persecution. Pastor Sun Hanqing's risked his life when the missionaries had escaped to the coast to defend the church, school, and probably most importantly, the teachers and students from harm when anti-foreign rioters threatened them. However, while the missionaries lauded his bravery as an act of loyalty to the mission, it seems reasonable to assume that it was just as much an act of loyalty to the church which he had dedicated his life to serving, rather than a disinterested act of heroic partisanship towards the absent British missionaries.

Liu Danzhi, on the other hand, proved himself much less reliable in the eyes of the missionaries, by converting to the Seventh Day Adventist church. It is easy to understand how the missionaries would have viewed the entrance of this sect as a threat to their work in light of the manner in which foreign mission groups coordinated their efforts at that time.

Mission work at the time was done in a very territorial manner. With a limited number of missionaries and such a vast population to evangelize, missionaries saw that they could hardly afford to risk making any work redundant by failing to coordinate with the other missions working in China. Thus missions would "claim"

counties and districts for their work, especially in the rural areas (cities, as strategic centers, would not be claimed by any one denomination.). Missions working in the same areas would occasionally reevaluate and reorganize their claims, resulting in certain churches or stations being given over to another denomination. However, this sort of informal cooperative arrangement was possible only between missions quite similar doctrinally and missiologically. The Seventh Day Adventist, with their emphasis on keeping Old Testament law and other doctrines which has caused them to be considered by some as a cult, did not qualify for this sort of cooperative relationship with other mission groups. Thus the establishment of an SDA church in the Baptist areas would have been considered an unwelcome invasion into BMS "territory." However, the missionaries obviously did not have much control over the actions of their church members or even their pastors, as the unwelcome SDA missionaries arrived in Shaanxi at the invitation of one of their very own pastors.

The influx of indigenous denominations such as The Jesus Family, the True Jesus Church and the Spiritual Gifts Society which spurred the charismatic revivals of the nineteen thirties and forties in the Sanyuan area was another challenge to the BMS Shaanxi mission and its churches. While all the founders considered in this section, except for Liu Danzhi, were said to have remained loyal to the mission and rejected the charismatic revival movement, they did not reject all contact and opportunities for cooperation with various indigenous social projects. Pastor Sun Xiangpu served as a principal of the Zhenguo Middle School established by Wang Ziyuan (described in section four). Wang Lingde, a third generation church leader, also worked with the Zhenguo Middle School and assisted Wang Ziyuan in establishing the Northwest Agricultural College.

While these men all worked closely with various foreign missionaries, the

founders described here display a remarkable degree of independence from the missionaries. Obviously, Pastor Liu Danzhi leaving the BMS to join the SDA comes to mind as a prominent example of a Chinese church leader demonstrating his theological and denominational independence in spite of his previous close relationship with the BMS. However, it is important to note that Pastor Liu did not leave the Baptists to pursue independence from foreign missionaries; instead he merely switched mission groups, inviting the SDA to send missionaries to help establish their church in Sanyuan. But even Pastor Sun Hanqing, the "Baptist stalwart," cooperated with Pastor Sun Xiangpu and Pastor Liu Danzhi and others in the independence movement of the 1930s which resulted in the establishment of the Independent Church of Xian. These pastors, along with the BMS missionaries, desired to see the church become fully Chinese and no longer dependant on foreign help and they were willing to act toward that end.

In addition to displaying growing independence from the mission in their theological, denominational, and organizational initiatives, the founders demonstrated an inner spiritual vitality that did not depend on foreign missionaries. The fact that they embraced their faith seriously is reflected in how they lived it out practically. These men chose to give their lives to serve the church and the broader community in very practical ways, primarily through education, relief, development, and church work. At times, they partnered with the missionaries in these projects, and at times they initiated works of their own. The relationship between the missionaries and these church leaders was one of partnership, not one of a superior with an inferior. In fact, it is notable that one veteran Gospel Village missionary referred to Pastor Sun Hanqing as his superior.

In addition to showing their deep commitment to Christianity in their work,

they also showed it by the great care they took to see that their faith was passed down to their children. This is reflected in the fact that Christian families often produced generations of church leaders. Even today, many of the pastors and Bible school teachers are descendants of some of the original Shandong immigrant group. This internal commitment to their faith, demonstrated externally in the lives they lived and the faith they passed down, helps to explain the continued vitality of the Chinese church in the decades following the expulsion of all foreign missionaries after liberation.

## II. Revival Village: The Guo Family Story

**(Guo Xiedong 郭协动, Guo Laixin 郭来信,**
**Guo Xisheng 郭希圣, Guo Dianan 郭奠安)**

The story of Revival Village (复兴村) adds another layer to the history of the Sanyuan area rural churches, and is especially useful in comparison to the more well-known story of Gospel Village. It was an honor to interview Guo Dian An, an eighty-eight year old, fourth generation Christian still living in Revival Village located south of Gospel Village. He told us that when Guo Xiedong, his great-grandfather, had led another group of the Shandong immigrants in building this Christian village, they discovered foundations leftover from an ancient village located there, and thus gave it the name, Revival Village. Guo Xiedong was known as the "Church Head" (教头) by the villagers.[31]

While the elder Guo was the respected head of the new village, his pre-Christian life had been less respectable. Like Sun Hanqing, he had been involved in some sort of secret sect or criminal activities as a young man in

Shandong. During a government crackdown on the gang or sect he belonged to, he was the only one who survived. When he returned home, he suffered from mental instability and in desperation worshiped idols for two years to try to recover his mental health.

Later he heard about some foreign missionaries and asked to meet them in order to receive prayer for his health. When the missionaries told him that he had to believe to be healed, and he readily agreed, marking the beginning of his Christian journey which would eventually bring him our story in Shaanxi.32

Guo Xiedong's son, Guo Laixin, (which means come and believe), was a teacher, Elder of the Fuxing Village church, and self-educated doctor. Guo Dianan described the hardships of poverty, famine, and hunger suffered by his grandfather; yet he recalled that he would still give work to the hungry unemployed who would come to the church for help.

It was only some time after the village was established that foreign missionaries came into contact with it. Guo Dianan told us how his grandfather, Guo Laixin, happened upon two British missionaries when he had gone to live in a cave in the mountains during a severe famine in 1901.[33] He identified those missionaries as Pastor Zhong Li and Pastor Mu of the Sanyuan mission. These two frequently revisited the village while Guo Dianan was a boy. The missionaries never established a mission station in Fuxing Village, but they often visited and cooperated with the church leaders there. George Young, the only missionary who mentions the Guo family, described his relationship with Guo Laixin (here "Elder Kuo"):

> It was a special joy to visit the Southern area and to stay in the home of Elder Kuo at Fushing village. His father was one the original Shantung settlers and he and his gracious wife and five children formed a model Christian home. After a night on the brick bed I was awakened at dawn

> with tea and a basin of hot water for washing. Family worship was conducted for the whole household by Elder Kuo. After a good breakfast of millet, bread and vegetables, Elder Kuo and his son Hsi-sheng and I made a tour of several Christian villages and some non-Christian market towns and fairs, preaching and distributing tracts and selling Gospels. We returned in the evening, tired and hungry, to be refreshed with a wash and a tasty meal prepared by Mrs. Kuo and her daughter-in-law.... A few medical cases were attended to by Elder Kuo, then we came home and after supper talked late into the night about the spiritual teaching of St. John's Gospel. We were truly one in Christ.[34]

Guo Dianan related a story about his grandfather which he heard him tell as a testimony of God's protection. During the Boxer rebellion, Guo Laixin was asked by one of the missionaries to carry a letter to Lanzhou to inform the missionaries there about the situation. However, after he had already completed half the journey, he discovered that he had forgotten to bring the letter. Later he was told by others on his journey that if he had been caught with the letter, he would have been killed. This experience convinced him of God's goodness and protection on his life.[35]

One of Guo Laixin's five children, Guo Xisheng, (whose name means hope and holiness), exceeded his father and grandfather in education and influence in the church. He attended the Gospel Village Boys School, the Sanyuan Bible School (三原道学班), and then was sent by a missionary to the Chengdu Theological College (华西四川神学院) where he was ordained after one year of study there. He then returned to Xian where he worked as a hospital chaplain at the Guangren Hospital (光仁医院) for a few years before moving to Sanyuan to become the pastor of the Southern district of churches. However, even then, he made it a point to visit Fuxing Village about once a month.[36] George Young also described him by saying:

> This third generation Christian is a tower of strength to the young Church. He testifies that the outstanding influence of his life was his Christian

> home. His steady and unremitting witness amidst the vagaries of the Revivalist movement has saved the Church from division and heresy. Here again it is a rare privilege to be the fellow-worker of such a Chinese leader.[37]

Guo Xisheng was also praised by Young as one of those faithful to the mission during the charismatic revival movements of the "stormy period of religious emotionalism" that swept Shaanxi during the war years.[38]

Guo Xisheng had three sons, Guo Le (郭乐), Guo Dianan (郭奠安) and Guo Xiqing.[39] Guo Le wanted to attend the military university, but his father instead had him enroll in the Bible school in Nanjing, where he ended up staying to eventually become the general secretary of the Nanjing Christian Council. Guo Xisheng died around 1960-1961 at 62 years of age.[40]

Guo Dianan also shared a little about his own life with us. Born in 1918, Guo Dianan attended primary school in his home village and middle school at the Gospel Village "Admire Beauty Middle School" (崇美中学). He remembers going preaching with his father on Sundays, but he did not seek a career in the church. Instead, he became a primary school history and geography teacher. He had four sons and two daughters, all of whom are Christians. Although he now lives alone in Revival village, he has repeatedly refused his family's requests to move with them to the larger town of Lintong, preferring to stay in the village of his great grandfather established. He commented that the churches there need a true revival, and prayed with us before we left.

Several important observations can be made about the story of Revival Village and the Guo family. First of all, the Guo family's story illustrates the fact that there was more than one Christian village established by the Shandong immigrants in the

1890s. Gospel Village eventually became somewhat well-known in missionary circles and some missionary writers assumed that it was the only Christian village of its kind.[41] In fact, it was one of at least three Christian villages established in the Sanyuan area at this time, the third one being Taihe Village (太和村).

Second, this story demonstrates the existence of independently established churches and even Christian villages at the very beginning of Sanyuan church history. While it is difficult to tell from the records if Gospel Village was established before or after British missionaries arrived on the scene, it is obvious that Revival Village was established solely by Christian immigrants without any assistance or even knowledge of the missionaries.

Third, the story of Revival Village shows another pattern of church-mission relations. Like the arrival of BMS missionaries in Shaanxi, the relationship between the mission and the church was again initiated on the Chinese side. It was not until 1901 that any relationship was established with the missionaries, and even then, though they visited frequently, the Baptists never established a mission station at Revival Village. Thus the church at Revival Village seems to have had a looser relationship with the mission than that of Gospel Village. However, close ties were built with the missionaries, as demonstrated by George Young's recollection of his fond memories of time spent with the Guo family and by the special task given to Guo Laixin to carry a letter for the missionaries to Gansu.

## III. Right Hand Men

### (Sun Qiyi, Zhou Zichen, Li Ren)

This section introduces three Christian leaders under the category of "Right Hand Men." These men all worked closely with the foreign missionaries,

providing essential service to the establishment of mission churches and institutions. Pastor Sun Qiyi worked in a mission established church in Xian and cooperated with missionaries on evangelistic itenerations in the countryside of Shaanxi. Zhou Zichen and Dr. Li Ren both worked extensively in the BMS Guangren hospital. These stories display the types of cooperation between missionaries and those who worked most closely alongside them and allow this study an opportunity to reevaluate their contribution to the mission and the church.

Pastor Sun Qiyi

Pastor Sun Qiyi is distinguished from many other church leaders by the fact that he did not come from a Christian family and was not a member of the one of the immigrant Shandong clans. Pastor Sun was converted as an adult; in fact, he was a lieutenant in the army during the siege of Xian at the time. No other details are recorded about his conversion or pre-Christian life. Some time after conversion, he attended one of the Bible schools for a full three year program, after which he was appointed as an evangelist and eventually became pastor of the East suburb of the Xian church. He also participated in itinerant evangelism with George Young, who is the only missionary who mentions him. Young records:

> Another young Chinese pastor with whom it was my privilege to work in the northern churches was Pastor Sun Chih-i. He had been a lieutenant in the Chinese Army at the time of the siege of Sian, when he was converted. After a three years' course at the Bible School he was appointed evangelist, and later pastor of East Suburb Church, Sian. He and I made a two months' tour of the churches in the journey we had riding mules along mountainous paths, venturing through bandit-infested areas, sleeping in buggy inns as we shared our quilts to keep warm, living in caves, meeting merchants and Mongolian traders on the way.... Eventually we completed this 250-mile journey and were welcomed by Pastor Wu and the deacons and elders of the Yenan Church.[42]

Pastor Zhou Zichen

Pastor Zhou Zichen was one of the few native Shaanxi church leaders described in some detail by missionaries. He was, in fact, described by more than one missionary as "one of the finest evangelists we ever had."[43] This was attributed in part to his innate understanding of Shaanxi customs and dialect as well as his skills developed in his pre-Christian life as a professional story teller/fortune teller.

Burt reports that Zhou went through a period of struggle before accepting the Gospel message, because he knew that conversion would mean giving up his livelihood as a fortune teller. He even engaged in public debates with evangelists, attempting to refute their preaching. However, it was his addiction to opium that finally made him desperate enough to give Christianity a try. His new faith did empower him to overcome his addiction, and because of this experience his preaching was said to always center on the theme of "Jesus the Emancipator."[44]

Using his story telling skills, Pastor Zhou could always draw a crowd to hear him preach.[45] However, he was said to have "lost face" on Sundays because he couldn't preach a "serious" sermon.[46] For a time, he served as a paid staff of the hospital as an evangelist. J.C. Keyte described his work in the BMS hospital:

> But the man's work! Day by day he would move he would move about in the wards, sitting first by this bed and then by that, setting the patient at his ease, inquiring into his progress, with a word of sympathy here and encouragement there, and leading up always – and always naturally – to the work and love of the Good Physician. *And he didn't preach sermons!* Before his arrival the good hospital evangelist had only the one method – to assemble the patients together and preach to them; firstly, secondly, thirdly, and so on. Chou broke up that method and taught what personal evangelism might be.[47]

George Young also reports making weekly hospital visits with him.[48]

Pastor Zhou was described as a good husband and father after his conversion, but he still had trouble living within his means.[49] As his career progressed, he moved from being a traveling evangelist, to a hospital evangelist, to a deacon, and finally becoming a pastor.[50]

Dr. Li Ren

Dr. Li Ren, a native of Shanxi, began his medical career in the BMS hospital as its dispenser.[51] J.C. Keyte records, "In January 1905, the one Chinese with any training was Mr. Li Jen, the dispenser. He was immediately taught to act as anesthetist."[52] As the hospital was always in need of trained help, Dr. Li was also put to work training other Chinese assistants. Keyte described at length the typical training and promotion process of which Dr. Li was a part:

> Cheng T'ien-yu, the boy who had been at Spalding Grammar School, was put under Mr. Li as assistant and to learn as quickly as might be what the latter knew.... Every other assistant had to be "grown". A coolie showing intelligence and character was promoted to ward boy, whilst a ward boy who showed aptitude soon made himself felt and was promoted by the doctor..... It was a sample of the way in which the hospital service was built up; teaching, teaching, and yet again teaching. Every opportunity had to be seized to open the mind, and increase the usefulness of such material as was to hand. As soon as a man had mastered a subject he was set the task of teaching it, as far as he was able, to another man who would subsequently be further drilled and instructed by the doctor himself.[53]

Dr. Li himself actually studied medicine in Hangkow after visiting England as a part of his studies. He was said to have been a well-respected colleague among the missionary doctors with whom he worked.[54] The missionaries noted not only his exceptional educational background, they also lauded his loyalty to the mission

through the difficult years of the anti-Christian and anti-foreign movements.[55]

After the death of Dr. Andrew Young in 1923, he was put in charge of the entire Xian hospital.

> A Chinese doctor, Li Jen, took full charge of the hospital after Dr. Young's death, and with only occasional help from missionary nursing sisters, discharged his duties with tenacity and efficiency on the medical and evangelistic sides of the work, declining many much more lucrative offers of government service. [56]

Burt described his work as head of the hospital:

> No one could have a simpler and more Christian aim than Dr. Li. It was to save man, body and soul. The atmosphere of the hospital was Christian through and through. The patients felt this, and also the trained nurses. A happy cooperation between all was most noticeable. The missionary was often asked to visit the hospital and talk with the nurses on Scripture themes. Dr. Li felt that very much depended upon them. Their intercourse with the patients might be so helpful, or on the contrary, so harmful. No bribes were taken nor were special privileges allowed to the wealthy, but all were treated without fear or favour. This required courage when officials tried to browbeat both nurses and doctors. But tact and firmness and the evident Christian principles won through and the reputation of the hospital was of the best. Dr. Li had a wonderful serenity of spirit. Never ruffled or impatient, he carried on with hope and confidence, which had a heartening effect on all who came to the hospital.[57]

The descriptions of Dr. Li given in the missionary records end abruptly by stating that he later returned to his native province of Shanxi.[58]

I have categorized these three men, Pastor Sun Qiyi, Pastor Zhou Zichen, and Dr. Li Ren, as "right-hand men" because of their close work with and essential contribution to the foreign missionaries and because of the lack of any record of them outside of mission records. Pastor Zhou and Dr. Li especially qualify for this

designation as they were probably paid staff during their tenure working in the Baptist hospital. For Pastor Sun, whose main contribution was pastoring a Chinese church, on the other hand, this label is perhaps less fitting. However, Pastor Sun was trained in the mission Bible school, appointed to positions in the BMS related churches in Xian, and partnered with George Young in countryside evangelism work. However, the main reason I included him in this section was that I found no mention of him in any Chinese sources and no one I interviewed in Xian and Sanyuan had ever even heard of him, making George Young's account the only surviving record of his life.

Several observations can be made about these "right-hand men". First of all, none of them were Shandong immigrants and all of them worked primarily in Xian. As my research of Chinese sources and interviews has focused mostly on the Sanyuan area where the Shandong immigrant churches were established, these two factors alone could explain much of my inability to locate any records or interview material about them in China. However, except for Sun Qiyi, several different missionaries mentioned or described these men in detail, which suggests that they were very important to the mission, and not just to a particular missionary personally. Indeed, the contribution that Zhou Zichen and Dr. Li Ren made to the missionary hospital work was irreplaceable. Jessie Lutz has commented on the necessity of these competent, educated, and faithful "right-hand men" for the smooth running of all mission work and she emphasizes the importance of crediting these Chinese workers and assistants with much of the actual work of the mission. In fact, the work which Zhou and Dr. Li did at the hospital probably contributed to the conversion of many, including the agricultural reformer and evangelist, Li Haifeng (see page 28). However, the lack of any Chinese sources recognizing the

contribution of these men, as well as the lack of any evidence that they continued to make a contribution to the church after 1949, (although it cannot be ruled out with only the scant resources available), makes me cautious to primarily credit this group for the establishment and development of the indigenous Chinese church to these men. In addition, the disparity between the mission and Chinese records also encourages caution for scholars studying Chinese church history relying solely or primarily on western records.

## IV. The Second Wave: The Church Unleashed

**(Li Menggeng, Feng Baoguang, Zhu Zhongyu, Li Haifeng, Wang Ziyuan)**

Li Menggeng (李梦庚)

While the missionaries showed their appreciation for their "right hand men" by dedicating space in their writings to describe these friends and coworkers, many significant Chinese Christians were never or barely mentioned in mission records. Traces of their influence must be sought for instead in Chinese county gazetteers and supplemented with information gathered in oral interviews. Fortunately, they are often well remembered by their former friends, colleagues, and students in Shaanxi. One example is Li Menggeng, the most prominent member of another very active Christian family. Son of a church elder from Gao Ling (高陵), Li was born soon after the turn of the century and was raised in the church. Along with all his siblings and even some cousins, Li dedicated his life to serving the Shaanxi church.[59] His younger sister, Li Shuwan (李淑婉), was especially noted for her work and teaching in the women's Bible school in Sanyuan. She graduated from Huabei seminary and joined Sun Ruiying (孙瑞英) in running the training school. She

outlived her elder brother, but lost her mental faculties in her old age, finally passing away in the 1990s. Li's younger cousin, Li Xiaoying (李效膺), also attended Huabei seminary and went on to serve the Shaanxi churches.[60]

Li Menggeng also attended Huabei seminary, along with Wang Daosheng.[61] Both would go on to be important leaders in the Shaanxi church. After his ordination, Li became pastor of the Sanyuan area churches during and after the war period.[62] He and Wang Daosheng shared responsibility for the Northern Wei district of churches (渭北区会). He also taught extensively at the Sanyuan Bible School. One of his students, Sun Ruilian, remembered him teaching classes on every book of the Bible as well as courses in ancient Chinese and mathematics.[63]

Li worked closely with the BMS missionaries, and was commended by them for his steadfast resolve against what they saw as a dangerous charismatic movement in the 1930s and 1940s. George Young commented that he along with several others stood firm "through this stormy period of religious emotionalism,"[64] and H.R. Williamson approved him as one who "stood by faithfully through the many vicissitudes of this disturbing period."[65]

In 1947, Li was mentioned as one of several church leaders who raised money to buy a piece of land with a large house to use as a church building for the Gaoling church.[66] After 1949, however, Li gave up full-time Christian work and returned to his farm, but continued to be active in the church on a part-time basis.[67] In 1958, he was chosen to be a standing committee member of the newly established Xian Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee. In 1966, at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, he was sentenced to twenty years in prison, and remained there until the Culturual Revolution ended. As a child, he had been diagnosed with tuberculosis, which he needed salt in order to keep under control. Reportedly,

although he was given no salt during his entire stay in prison, he emerged from prison "fat and healthy." He attributed his health in prison to God's power proclaiming, "God is a living God!"[68]

In his old age, Pastor Li grew nearly blind. His blindness resulted in an accident when a goat wrapped its tether around Li's legs without his realization and then ran off when someone called it, causing Li to fall and crippling him for the rest of his life.[69] He died in the mid 1980s at over eighty years old. His children, however, dismayed at the persecution their father endured in the Cultural Revolution, abandoned their father's faith and did not continue in the church.[70]

Pastor Feng Baoguang (冯葆光)

The immigrant community didn't completely cut off ties with their former home. Especially while the foreign missionaries were still present, connections between the mission churches in Shandong and Shaanxi continued. A second wave of immigration brought about by the worsening situation in the war with Japan brought another influx of east coast Christians to Shaanxi.[71] Pastor Feng Baoguang, a pastor of a BMS church in Qingzhou, was one of the refugees who fled to Shaanxi as a refugee in 1941.[72] However, this was not Pastor Feng's first time to leave his home province; he had earlier moved to Xichang (西昌) in Sichuan province where he did some sort of church or government work with minorities. He was politically active in the wartime period, establishing two organizations: the Resist Japan War Service (抗日战争服务) and the Borderlands Service (边疆服务).[73]

Pastor Feng came from a poor Christian family in Shandong. His parents were farmers who never left Shandong. Feng was educated in Shandong, graduating from the well-known Cheeloo University before going on to pastoral work.[74]

While he might have been fleeing the violence of the war in Shandong, Shaanxi was no safe haven. Pastor Feng was actually shot in the side by bandits on the last leg of his trip from Xian to Sanyuan.[75] While he survived, his wound never fully healed, continuing to excrete puss for the rest of his life.[76]

Other members of Pastor Feng's church came with him from Shandong, and they quickly became integrated into the BMS churches in the Sanyuan and Gospel Village areas.[77] Pastor Feng put down roots quickly, buying land and taking up church service soon after arriving.[78] In 1942, Pastor Feng was put in charge of the Bible school (光中道学院) founded by BMS missionary A.G. Shorrock as the first Chinese principal of that institution.[79]

In the 1950s, Pastor Feng moved to Yongle where he lived for the rest of this life. The foreign missionaries seemed to see Pastor Feng as an equal colleague and a treasured friend. When the missionaries were forced to leave, one left his pet dog to Pastor Feng's family, which his daughter-in-law recalled, remained in their care for many years afterwards as a symbol, she said, of their continuing friendship despite their separation.[80]

When the missionaries, left, Pastor Feng, along with Wang Daosheng and Chong Huaguang?, led the former BMS network of churches.[81] However, his close relationship with the missionaries came back to haunt him in the Cultural Revolution, when he was forced to wear a mocking sign and dunce cap and sweep the streets to humiliate him for his "collusion" with imperial powers and for his sin of owning land. He probably died in 1979, at the age of eighty-seven, leaving a two sons and a daughter behind.[82]

Pastor Zhu Zhongyu (朱忠玉)

Pastor Zhu Zhongyu was another important church leader from Shandong who immigrated to Shaanxi during the Anti-Japanese War. However, Pastor Zhu's arrival in Shaanxi was not as welcomed by the foreign missionaries as that of Pastor Feng Baoguang. From the missionaries' perspective, Zhu Zhongyu was one of the charismatic troublemakers who was causing disturbances in the church and mission work.

Zhu Zhongyu came from a Christian family in Shandong: even his paternal grandfather was known to be a believer.[83] He received his education in Shandong,[84] and later moved to Nanjing where he became the editor of Jia Yuming's (贾玉铭) Christian publication called *Spiritual Light* (灵光报) in the 1930s.[85] When the Japanese attacked Nanjing, he fled to Shaanxi and settled in An Qiu county (安丘县). He became pastor of the Yongle church and was actively involved in the charismatic revivals that swept the Sanyuan area in the 1930s and 1940s. He also taught in the Chongmei Middle School.[86] After the Northwest Christian Agricultural Improvement Agency was established in Yongle, Zhu Zhongyu was invited to take a post as pastor for evangelism. After taking this position, Pastor Zhu moved to Yongle and established a charismatic church there which became a base of operations for the Northwest charismatic church.[87] In the 1950s, he moved to Shanghai where he worked for Jia Yuming, his uncle, as his personal secretary in Jia Yuming's seminary (灵修神学院). After teaching and working there for ten years, Pastor Zhu returned to Shaanxi, where he was soon sentenced to spend the Cultural Revolution in prison.[88]

Pastor Zhu died in 1982 at the age of eighty-two. He was remembered as an influential Christian leader and a prolific writer, having written many commentaries

and books which are unfortunately no longer available.[89]

Li Haifeng (李海峰)

Another prominent Christian leader of this period who was involved both in the revival movements and various social service initiatives was Li Hai Feng, who died in his late seventies in 1955. As a first generation Christian, Li apparently had a dramatic conversion. However, oral accounts are conflicting on whether he was driven to Christianity by desperation caused by his addiction to opium,[90] or if it was his daughter's serious illness that eventually brought him to the missionary hospital in Xian where he heard and responded to the gospel.[91] Perhaps it was a combination of the two, but the testimony of BMS missionary, F.S. Russell, confirms that his opium addiction was definitely a major factor in Li's conversion in 1927:

> Lee-Hai-Feng was a very wealthy man, but he and his wife were slaves to the opium habit. I gave him a copy of the New Testament which he read. The story of the rich young ruler greatly disturbed his mind. In response to his eager inquiries as to what he should do, I told him that loyalty to Christ meant the surrender of all that hindered, such as opium, and if need be wealth. Mr. and Mrs. Lee entered our hospital. Both were cured of the opium habit, soundly converted, were baptized and joined the Church.[92]

After his conversion, Li did not receive any formal training or take any official position in the church. However, he was a man of some means, and his new-found faith completely transformed his life and he committed to use all his resources for kingdom work. Russell continued:

> Thereupon their wealth was entirely devoted to Christ. Mr. Lee set up a

> knitting and weaving factory in his ancestral home, to relieve and maintain over fifty famine refugees. He organized a Christian Community centre on a co-operative basis, and rehabilitated over a hundred impoverished farmers. Then he decided that his entire energies and resources should be devoted to direct evangelism.[93]

In 1928, he built a church building on his own property in Xian and called it simply The Christian Church (基督教礼拜堂).[94] The following year he organized a group of over 10 Christians to travel to Xianyang, Sanyuan, and Gaoling to find a suitable site to buy land for the beginning of an agricultural project. They used donated funds to buy 3000 mu of land in Gaoling which became the site of Li's "Northwest Chinese Christian Agriculture and Industry Improvement Society" (中华基督教西北农工改进会). This society cooperated first with the Jingling University Agricultural College to establish a 500 mu experimental farm called the Northwest Agricultural Experimental Farm and later with the KMT department of Agriculture and Forestry to run an experimental technologies farm of over 700 mu. In total, Li is credited with establishing four large farms which promoted improvements in agricultural technology, including one in which he cooperated with Yu Youren (于右任).[95]

In 1933, Li initiated the Cotton Production and Distribution Cooperative (棉花生产运销合作社) which coordinated cotton production efforts among 260 participants in ten villages. They grew cotton on 4400 mu of land and established three cotton spinning factories.[96]

In 1939, Li established an experimental farm for the main purpose of supporting an orphanage. In 1948, he added an agricultural and technical school to that farm. Li's Northwest Agricultural and Industrial Improvement Society also established an orphanage, clinic, along with religious centers in Yongle.[97]

Those who worked in Li's Northwest Society included Pastor Zhu Xin (朱信) who later went on to study theology and work in the US, Pastor Zhu Kunyu (朱昆玉) who later established the charismatic church in Yongle which became the base for the Northwest Charismatic Activities Center (西北令恩运动中心), and his cousin, Pastor Zhu Zhongyu (朱忠玉), described above.[98]

Li used profits from his agricultural ventures to support traveling evangelists and church planters. These included the mother-daughter team of Liu Airong (刘爱荣) and Sun Ruilian (孙瑞莲), the latter is still living in Yongle where I was able to interview her. She described Li Haifeng as a "Great Mind" who was heavily involved in the charismatic revivals that occurred from 1939-1949 in the area from Gospel Village to Yongle. She and her widowed mother, who were originally Christian immigrants from Shandong, were invited by Li in 1939 to move from Lintong to join his pioneering work in the Yongle area. "In that time, there were no Christians in this area," she recalled. Liu Airong continued to travel, preach and plant churches until her early death in 1962, at age 55. In the meantime, her daughter, Sun Ruilian was educated at the Gospel Village Girl's School and the Sanyuan Bible School where she studied under Li Menggeng (李梦庚) among others. She was also involved in itinerant evangelism in the area north of Sanyuan and later was invited to move to Yongle to help establish the church there. Sun Ruilian described that the typical approach of the traveling evangelists was to organize a gathering in an open area of a village where they would hold simple services of singing and preaching.[99]

Li Haifeng was himself also involved in evangelistic itenerations. One of Li's coworkers recalled how he had built his own "Gospel Car" (福音车) to use on evangelistic itinerations. The unusual "car," which consisted of a donkey cart with

a loud speaker on the back for preaching, could attract quite a crowd to hear his messages in the countryside.[100] He and his bands of traveling evangelists were heavily involved in the charismatic revivals that occurred in the villages around Gospel Village from 1939-1949.[101] While the Baptist missionaries usually frowned on the "disturbing" activities of the charismatic revival movement, intriguingly, Russell describes Li's evangelistic ventures with approval:

> In 1949 his latest venture is a brightly-coloured gospel cart bedecked with texts. Inside is a microphone and loud speaker which makes it possible to preach to several thousands in the public parks. He is being mightily used of God. His humility and evangelistic zeal are a tower of strength to the Church in Shensi, and to all who know him. To come into his presence is a benediction. What a transformation from the emaciated opium addict of twenty-two years ago, to the ferven-evangelist of to-day.[102]

Those still living in Yongle who knew Li remembered him as a generous and humble man. They recalled that he always gave to those in need, sold much of his land and donated the money to the church, and brought his own bread instead of money for food on his evangelistic itenerations.[103] Eight months before he died in the beginning of 1955, Li predicted that his own death was immanent and made his last arrangements. He sold his land and donated everything he had to the church. He died on the third day of the ninth lunar month of 1955 at nearly eighty years old. He was survived by his son, who moved to Xian and his daughter, who later tragically committed suicide in the Cultural Revolution.[104]

Wang Ziyuan (王子元)

Wang Ziyuan was one of the most influential and certainly the most politically

active of any Christian in the history of the Sanyuan church. The following information about him is from an article written by his grandson, Wang Zemin (王泽民).[105] Wang Ziyuan was born to a poor Christian family in Shandong on February 20, 1891. Soon thereafter, his family joined the group of immigrants moving to Shaanxi and settled in Taihe Village (太和村) where Wang Ziyuan grew up.

Wang was given a classical education at home in addition to the Biblical training and English lessons he received from English Baptist missionaries, probably through attending their primary and secondary schools. Wang was quite a good student, showing special abilities in English, which gave him the opportunity to become an English teacher at his school upon graduation.

In his youth, Wang became concerned with national affairs and began to associate with other young revolutionaries. In 1918, he and some of his friends formed the "National Pacification Army" (靖国军) with the purpose of preserving the gains of the 1911 revolution. He himself became the head of the foreign relations department of this organization and traveled across the country frequently on various missions associated with their activities. While Wang then believed politics to be the path to national salvation, he hadn't given up his faith; he would often stop at local churches along the way on his travels. In the winter of 1918, he travelled to Shanghai to represent the Jingguo Army in a meeting with Sun Yat-sen. His meeting with Sun resulted in his admittance to the Chinese Revolutionary Party and later his appointment as a consultant to the office of the president.

However, in 1921, he left his post in Shanghai when crisis in Shaanxi caused Sun Yat-sen to send Wang Ziyuan back to serve as a correspondent between the Jingguo Army and the warlord Feng Yuxiang. His efforts to find common ground between the two parties failed, however, and the Jingguo Army was expelled from

power, causing some of the organization's leadership to flee Shaanxi. However, Wang himself remained in Shaanxi and began to participate in local education reform, supporting the combining of the Chong Zhen (崇真) and Mei Li (美丽) boys and girls schools to form the first coeducational middle school in Shaanxi, Chongmei Middle School (崇美中学) at which the famous historian Wu Bolun (武伯纶) later studied. In 1924, Wang Ziyuan decided to pursue further studies at Beijing University.

Later, Wang was appointed by Feng Yuxiang to various governmental positions in Gansu and Henan which he performed duties in administration and development, including the restoration of the road between Shaanxi and Henan. In 1928, Feng appointed Wang as the head of the Qinghai provincial civil administration department, in which he acted on behalf of the governor of Qinghai. In this post, he made a major contribution to the development of Qinghai infrastructure and also published at least two books – *A Development Plan for Young Talents*, and *Modern Qing Hai.* In 1930, when Ma Bu Fang (马步芳) took over Qinghai with the support of Chiang Kai Shek, Wang returned to Shaanxi.

After Wang his return, he was invited to take a government post in Nanjing, but having become disillusioned with the political realm, he refused. From then on, Wang threw his efforts into education. In 1932, Wang took up the post of the director of the preparatory office for the Northwest Farming and Forestry Professional School (the predecessor of The Northwest Agricultural University), thus beginning his career in agricultural education. However, in 1936, just the school was ready to open, another man was appointed as the principal of the school because of a grudge held by a colleague. Deeply hurt, Wang returned to Xian.

At forty-five years of age, Wang Ziyuan had dedicated his life to helping his

country through political service and educational endeavors, but to this point, he felt that he had accomplished nothing. With frustrations mounting and his future unclear, he began to despair. However, in the fall of 1937 when Dr. Song Shangjie (宋尚节) came to preach in Xian, Wang took his family to the evangelistic meeting. Dr. Song's message deeply moved him and he realized what he must do: he decided to dedicate the rest of his life to educational and Christian work. In December of that year, the Xian Incident occurred, the aftermath of which caused many of his friends to be persecuted by the Nanjing government. With the nation in crisis and many of his friends facing danger, Wang became sick with worry and moved his family back to his home village near Sanyuan.

When he returned he was disturbed to find the villagers bound in poverty, with little access to education and without even a church building in which they could worship. Thus he encouraged his children to start a night school for farmers and engage in anti-Japanese propaganda. Using the village primary school thatch cottage as a temporary church building, Wang invited teachers to come to preach, organized evangelistic meetings, and prepared to initiate educational work. Using his contacts in the academic world, the local gentry, and local Christians and donating some of his own property, in 1939 Wang established the National Inspiration (振国) middle and primary schools in An Le Village (安乐村) of Sanyuan county. In order to keep the tuition affordable for the poor villagers, Wang also established a factory, of which all the profits went to support the school. Whenever the school was short of money, Wang would sell some of his own grain and cotton to meet the need. Even so, the school was able to supply over ten students with full support for their studies. The motto Wang gave his students was, "Respect and Love One Another, Sacrifice for Others, Study Hard, Inspire China"

(互敬互爱，舍己为人，努力学习，振兴中国).

The author of the article boasts that it was because of Wang Ziyuan's patriotic influence, progressive teachers, and the influence of Christianity that the KMT was unable to get a foothold in his school. Instead, many progressive publications were read by the students. The school became well known in the region for its high quality of education, with its most influential graduate being Wang Zeming (王泽明) who became a professor of medicine in Xian. In 1948, Wang Ziyuan, with the support of several colleagues, established the Northwest Agricultural College to provide an opportunity for further education for poor villagers.

Wang Ziyuan's schools were Christian and he hoped that his students would also accept Christianity. To that end, he invited famous preachers like Pastor Jia Yumingg and Pastor Mark（马可）to preach at his school for one or two days per semester. Every evening, the Christian students at the school would gather for a Bible study and prayer meeting and occasionally teachers would participate in evangelistic trips to nearby villages. Every Christmas, the school would hold a large celebration which would include performance of progressive songs and dramas and would attract many participants from the village.

In order to provide a place of worship, Wang and other Christians built a large four room classroom building for the use of both church and school. During summer and winter breaks, the building was used to hold week long evangelistic meetings, at which well known evangelists would be invited to speak. Sometimes as many as five to six hundred attendees would attend these meetings from the village and surrounding area. All of these activities were supported by the contributions of local church members and supplemented by larger donations from Wang Ziyuan himself.

The successful school and vibrant church life of the village attracted the attention of foreign missionaries in the area, and they approached Wang Ziyuan several times with offers of collaboration and financial support. Wang would not budge, however, refusing to allow foreign support or collaboration in the church or educational work, or even invite a foreign missionary to speak in the church. Of course, this also affected his relationship with Chinese Christians who were associated with the mission churches who could not understand his refusal.

In 1949, Wang embraced the Communist liberation nearly wholeheartedly. He was reportedly known for saying, "Except for their atheism, the communist party has accomplished everything I have been hoping for all my life for our people and our country." He diligently studied the communist policies, responded to communist appeals for support, and gave both the Northwest Agricultural College and the National Inspiration Middle School over to the government. He participated in social movements, and served as an investigative juror and helped to right a mistaken murder conviction by finding and convicting the real murderer. In 1955, he became a representative to Sanyuan's first CPPCC committee.

In 1950, Wang fully embraced the Three Self Patriotic Movement. He said, "The Chinese church must implement self-government, self-support, and self-propagation. My own experience of planting a church ten years ago supports this. This is the Chinese Church's necessary path to revival."

After National Inspiration Middle School (振国中学) was turned over to the government, the church lacked a meeting place. Thus, Wang threw his efforts into attaining government permission and church member support to build a four room church building. However, after the building was completed, the church still had trouble finding preachers. The congregation attempted to persuade Wang Ziyuan to

preach, but as he had never been ordained, he refused. In order to solve this problem, Pastor Zhu Zhongyu appointed Wang Ziyuan as a church elder, after which Wang traveled and preached throughout the region.

In 1959, Wang traveled to Beijing to express his views on China's political situation to some old friends and to deliver his views to the central government in the form of a letter to Mao Zedong expressing his hope for a peaceful liberation of Taiwan and that the party would uphold freedom of religious belief. Hearing his frustration and views, his friends advised him to be discreet considering the current political situation. However, after he returned to Shaanxi, he wrote a letter to the central government expressing his opinions. His suggestions were rewarded with an arrest in April of 1960 during the "Protection Arrests" movement. While in prison, Wang still believed that his opinions were correct and wrote a letter entitled, "A Call for the Peaceful Liberation of Taiwan." However his actions seemed useless and he often could only express his hopes to God through prayer and fasting. On January 19, 1964, Wang Ziyuan died of an unnamed illness in prison. In 1978, after a thorough investigation, Wang was exonerated of any crime and his name was rehabilitated.

In this survey of Christian leaders, several characteristics and patterns emerge. First, most of the Christian leaders of this era were not first generation converts, but instead were the products of Christian homes. Of these eight men, six came from Christian homes. Two are confirmed as third generation Christians. Only one, Li Haifeng, was a first generation convert. (There was no available information on Zhu Zhongyu's parentage, other than the fact that he came from Shandong).

The second characteristic common to these leaders is that they were very well

educated. Although the details of each one's primary education was not recorded, several attended Christian primary schools such as the boys school in Gospel Village. Some then went on to studies at the BMS Bibles schools in Xian and Sanyuan. All but Li Haifeng, who was converted in his fifties, went on to higher education at either a seminary or university outside of the province. Only two, Wang Lingde and Wang Ziyuan, were reported to have chosen secular courses of study in university.

Six were ordained pastors for most of their careers; (Wang Ziyuan was ordained late in his career and Li Haifeng was never ordained). These well-educated pastors did not merely pastor one village church; they were often appointed to positions of overseeing districts in which even twenty or more churches could be under their jurisdiction. Many of them actively established and built new churches. Li Menggeng helped to build the church in Gaoling. Zhu Zhongyu founded the charismatic church in Yongle. Li Haifeng built a church on his property in Xian and established religious centers and chapels in his farms, orphanages, and factories.

Second only to pastoral and evangelist work was educational endeavors. These men sought to meet the specific educational needs that existed in their rural context. For many villagers and rural farmers, even a primary school eduation was not to be taken for granted. Thus, Christian educators dedicated much effort towards maintaining, improving, and expanding educational opportunities for rural children. Many worked as teachers and principals of Christian primary and middle schools. Wang Ziyuan was involved in the educational reforms which united the Chongzhen and Meili mission schools into the coeducational Chongmei Middle school. Wang Lingde later served as principal of this school and Zhu Zhongyu also taught there. Wang Ziyuan eventually even established his own schools, Zhengguo

primary and middle schools, to provide educational opportunities for the children of poor villagers. Sun Xiangpu later served as a principal of the Zhengguo school and Wang Lingde was also involved in this endeavor.

These schools served several purposes. Besides providing a basic education for village children, the schools also provided religious education for the young, a means of passing down the faith to the next generation. In addition, they also provided a pool of potential church leaders. These potential leaders could receive additional education in the arts and sciences as well as theology by attending one of the Bible schools established for this purpose. Several of these men dedicated themselves to providing Bible training for evangelists and pastors in this way. Li Menggeng taught extensively in the Sanyuan Bible school. Feng Baoguang came to be the head of the Sanyuan Bible school, the first Chinese pastor to hold that position at the missionary established school.

After providing a basic education for village children, the second most pressing educational need for these rural Christians was the development of agricultural technologies and training. Wang Ziyuan dedicated four years of his life to the establishment of the Northwest Farming and Forestry Professional School, a project in which Wang Lingde also participated. Li Haifeng, however, accomplished the most in the area of agricultural development and education. Only one year after his conversion, he established the Northwest Christian Agricultural Improvement Society, organizing groups of Christians to buy large tracts of land to use as experimental farms and cotton productions cooperatives. In 1948, he also established the Agricultural and Technological School. Li Haifeng's farms were unique in their religious nature. The proceeds from these farms were used to support itinerant evangelists and orphanages. In addition, Li sought to provide the

workers on his commune like farms and plantations with a wide range or services including schools, clinics, factories and chapels.

Besides pastoral, educational, and agricultural endeavors, at least two of these Christian leaders were also involved in politics. Feng Baoguang was said to perhaps have been involved in government work with minority tribes in Sichuan before he came to Shaanxi. He also organized anti-Japanese efforts and represented the church at a Communist party meeting to organize strategies for resisting Japan. However, Wang Ziyuan was by far the most politically involved, having dedicated the first half of his life to a fairly successful career in politics. Overall, however, Chinese pastors and Christian leaders, while patriotic, did not seem to be overly involved in the political realm.

While this study is mainly concerned with the development of the Sanyuan area churches before 1949, the fate of these pastors and leaders after the Communist victory is instructive for our understanding of the church in modern China. Some, such as Feng Baoguang and Wang Daosheng continued in their positions for a time, but as leaders in the newly established Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). Others, such as Li Menggeng, were said to have given up most of their church work and found secular forms of employment. Zhu Zhongyu, on the other hand, was quite unique in that he was said to have moved to Shanghai to work in Jia Yuming's seminary in the 1950s. While some church work continued for a time, all other Christian work ceased: schools were handed over to the government, farms were collectivized, and Bible schools were shut down. Pastors were eventually forbidden from drawing salaries from the church and thus had to find other means of support, such as the condensed milk factory established by several pastors. By the time of the Cultural Revolution, most of the Christian leaders who were still alive

were sentenced to long imprisonments and subjected to humiliating persecution. It seems that one of the general effects of all these setbacks was often that the children of this generation of Christians were unable to continue the work these men started. Some, in fact, found it too difficult to even continue to hold to the faith of their fathers.

## V. Women: Untold Stories

### (Yan Meiling, Mrs. Norman Liang, Sun Ruiying)

Mrs. Yan (Meiling)

Women also figured prominently into the church membership and a few were especially described by the missionaries. Mrs. Yan, or Mei Ling, was known as "a great soul-winner and a great teacher."[106] She was one of the first girls to graduate from the Gospel Village girls school, and later served as a teacher there for many years. She was known for her extensive knowledge of the Bible and her persuasive ability to express the gospel message. Burt commented,

> Her addresses were always full of instruction, and her fund of anecdotes and Scripture knowledge, together with her homely wit and advice, were impressive. She led many into the Way of Life, and nothing to her mind was comparable to the joy of winning souls. She was and still is a great Bible lover. Her knowledge of the Scriptures is surprisingly wide and accurate. Her sheaf of notes and little books of outlines, culled from all sources, reveal her careful and diligent habits of study.[107]

Always involved heavily in church activities, especially those that related to women and girls, she later came to be in charge of the Women's Bible school. In her old age she was said to have become nearly blind, but still insisted in

participating in what church activities she could still do, including writing encouraging letters to other women.

Two of her daughters were mentioned: one married the secretary to the Provincial Governor and another a well to do business man who was also the leader of the Independent Church of Xian. While Rev. Wang Hong remembered a woman of a similar name and description, we were unable to locate her relatives in Gospel Village to confirm this account or provide other details.

Mrs. Norman Liang (Miss Min Li)

Mrs. Norman Liang (Miss Min Li) was another prominent woman in the Shaanxi church. Said to be the daughter of one of the first Christian women in Shaanxi province, she also attended the Gospel Village girls school. After graduating, she continued her education in Shanghai, later returning to teach at the primary school. She was said to have been very dedicated to the church and its school. Burt records:

> At one time the school had to be closed owing to the very troublous days we had to pass through. For the time being she took a post in a Government school in which, by her skill in administration as well as by her teaching powers, she rendered valuable service. On the reopening of our mission school, she at once returned to us, although the remuneration was only one-third of the salary she was receiving. She simply said, "I owe all I have and am to your help and to God's goodness in sending you to Shensi. It is my duty as well as my joy to do something for Him.[108]

However, she did eventually leave Gospel Village when she married another Christian teacher and moved with him to Beijing. There she obtained an MA degree from Yanjing University and went on to become the principal of the Union

Women's Bible School. A female missionary in Beijing described her work there:

> She is one of the foremost Chinese Christian women in Peking. She is the Principal of the Union Women's Bible School. She is a truly great woman, one of the pillars of the Church in North China. Her influence goes out wide and deep.[109]

However, Burt sought to balance her list of accomplishments by concluding his description of her by stating, "but she is still the simple-hearted Christian that she always was, seeking to render all the help she can to her own people and the Church of Jesus Christ in China."[110] Interviews did not reveal any new information about her, but Rev. Wang Hong did recall a teacher of the surname Li in Gospel Village.[111]

Sun Ruiying (孙瑞英)

Sun Ruiying was another significant woman from the Gospel Village area. Born in 1907, Sun was of the first generation to be born and raised in Gospel Village and the neighboring Taihe Village (太和村).[112] While the missionaries were quick to establish boys and girls primary schools in Gospel Village, early students had few local options for secondary education and beyond. Sun Ruiying was one of those sent by her parents back to Shandong to receive a secondary education followed by further seminary training. There she met the wife of the famous warlord Feng Yuxiang (冯玉祥), a fact that she would often mention to others, although the significance or extent of their relationship is unclear.[113]

Sun Ruiying married a grandson of Sun Hanqing, but her husband died quite early in their marriage, leaving her a widow for most of her life. She had one son, who moved to Shanghai and also died fairly young. He left her three grandchildren, two girls and a boy who stayed in Shanghai.[114]

Sun devoted much of her life to serving the church and her country in various

ways. She became the chairman of the YWCA in Xian and helped to organize resist Japan activities for the women of her organization. She established a National War-time Work Committee for women in 1938, which worked closely with a similar organization, the Northwest Battlefield Service Group run by Ding Ling (丁玲), another Christian woman of Shaanxi.[115] These groups helped people to escape from Xian to Yenan and also sewed clothing for the army.

After the communist victory in 1949, Sun became an advocate for the new Three-Self Patriotic Movement, and eventually became a vice-chairman of the Shaanxi Christian Council.[116] In 1998, at the age of 91, she became crippled. Having no family in Shaanxi, she moved in with Rev. Wang Hong's family in Gospel Village where she lived until her death in 2001.[117]

The brief account of the lives of these three women reveals several characteristics of the women of these rural churches and Christian villages. First, these three women, as well as Li Shuwan (Li Menggeng's younger sister), Liu Airong and Sun Ruilian (the two evangelists who worked with Li Haifeng), all seem to have come from Christian families. The fact that none of these women were first generation converts is not surprising considering the social and cultural barriers that usually kept women out of the reach of foreign missionaries. However, missionaries were not entirely without success in evangelizing women as can be seen by the fact that Mrs. Norman Liang was noted as the daughter of the first Christian women in Shaanxi. This bit of information seems to suggest the possibility that her mother was a Shaanxi native, not an immigrant, and that her father was not a Christian. The Sanyuan area churches, as they were initially associated with the BMS mission, were slower to reach out to non-Christian women, as the mission was slower to send single female missionaries and thus women's work lagged behind

other areas in the Sanyuan region. In fact, for the first four years of the BMS Shaanxi mission, there was only one female missionary in residence Moir Duncan's wife, Jessie. Her main work was in establishing and running the Gospel Village Girls' School.[118]

Thus the mission did not lag in providing educational opportunities for the daughters (and sons) of the Christian immigrants. Mission girls schools were being established in China forty years before the Chinese established their first private girls school in Shanghai in 1897.[119] Thus, expanded opportunities for Christian women began with education, and often the educational opportunities which Christian girls enjoyed, especially among the rural poor, far exceeded anything which most Chinese girls were able to expect at this stage.

All three of the women in this section attended the Gospel Village girls school, which also provided them with the opportunity to then seek further education, either in Shaanxi or other provinces. From the earliest generation of Christian women, Mrs. Norman Liang and Mrs. Yan Meiling both had long careers as primary school teachers, as well as being involved in women's Bible training. Early opportunities for higher education existed, as demonstrated by Mrs. Norman Liang's achievement of completing an MA and going on to become the principal of the Union Women's Bible School in Beijing. Similarly, Sun Ruilian, Sun Ruiying and Li Shuwan also received Bible school and seminary training, both in Shaanxi and other provinces.

These educated women were a great asset to both church and mission work, working as teachers, evangelists, social activists and even eventually coming to hold positions in church administration. Women's participation in church life did not seem to be particularly limited by their gender: women could teach, preach, and even work as itinerant evangelists. However, women were not ordained and did not

serve in most leadership positions.

Kwok Pui-lan concluded in her definitive study of Chinese Christian women that Christianity was seen as a liberating, empowering force for Chinese women, both as it fought against the most conspicuous forms of female oppression: foot binding, infanticide, and concubinage and most importantly in promoting female education. However, as the more radical feminist movement came into its own in the 1920s, Christianity began to be seen as outmoded and patriarchal and less useful for the women's rights movement. While the Christian approach to female participation in church and society was to emphasize the distinctively female virtue of the woman's sphere, radical feminism sought sexual equality and the assumption of male roles.[120] While the feminist movement did influence the church, making more prominent roles for women socially acceptable, Christian women did not tend to seek the same radical sexual equality as the women's rights movement. We can see this same development outlined in the experiences of the Sanyuan women. Earlier Christian women such as Mrs. Norman Liang and Yan Meiling focused most of their work on other women and children. As the church became more independent and as the social and political climate changed, even more opportunities sprang up for women. Christian women of the second and third generations sought feminine avenues of involvement in political and social movements alongside the men of that time. Women's groups like the YWCA provided social services and opportunities for women to organize themselves. Both through the YWCA and through her National War-time Work Committee for Women, Sun Ruiying organized women to sew uniforms for the army and host refugees during the war. The contributions of Chinese Christian women were recognized when in 1937 a Chinese woman was among the group of four church members appointed to

represent the Sanyuan churches at the national CCC meeting.[121] By the late 1930s and onwards we also see the growing acceptance of female participation in various forms of church leadership, beginning with Mrs. Peng's selection as a representative at the CCC conference, and culminating in Sun Ruiying's appointment as vice chairman of the Shaanxi Christian Council after 1949. But it must be remembered that women were a minority in the church and Christian women were an even tinier minority in society at large, limiting their potential impact on both.

And while some women did contribute to the growth and vitality of the church through public ministries, the equally valuable service of most Christian women was unseen – in the home. The best evidence that these unsung heroes of the faith were successful in fulfilling their domestic duties of creating Christian homes and raising Christian children is seen in the many second and third generation Christian leaders whom they raised. According to George Young, Guo Xisheng himself attested to this reality:

> This third generation Christian [Guo Xisheng] is a tower of strength to the young Church. He testifies that the outstanding influence of his life was his Christian home.[122]

Young also describes the welcoming atmosphere of Guo's home as an adult, provided by his wife and daughter-in-law. They offered their hospitality to their Western guest in the form of washing, cooking, and caring for their guest.[123]

George Young also praised the Christian atmosphere of Wang Daosheng's home as follows:

> Pastor Wang Tao-sheng of the Central District of twenty-four churches is another of the young leaders of our Shensi Church. his house in Jenho village three miles south-east of Gospel Village was another thoroughly Christian home. 'Christ is the Head of this Home' was a text on the wall

that caught my eye and it was indeed the truth.[124]

Through these common domestic duties of cleaning, cooking, hosting, farming, marketing, and raising children, these Christian women provided both a home base for their husband's work and a nesting place for the next generation of Christian leaders. Although most of their names have been lost to history, the great and selfless work which these women accomplished made a noteworthy contribution to the development, spread and growth of the Shaanxi church and should not be forgotten.

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1 Moir Duncan, *Missionary Mail to Faithful Friends and Candid Critics*, (London: Elliot Stock, 1900), 49.

George A. Young, *The Living Christ in Modern China.* (London: Carey Press, 1947), 108.

2 Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 88-91.

3 Duncan, *Missionary Mail*, 49.

4 Ernest Whitby Burt, *After Sixty Years: The Story of the Church Founded by the Baptist Missionary Society in North China,* (London: Carey Press, 1937), 125-126.

5 张冠儒：〈三原县中华基督教会见史〉《三原史资料》，中国政治协商会议陕西省三原县委员会文史资料委员会，第七辑，1990。

While Zhang names five important church leaders, Brian Stanley mentions only four who came with the original immigrant group. While it is unknown which one is omitted from the list, as Stanley's work is based on mission records, it is probable but not certain that Liu was the one excluded due to his leaving the denomination soon after arriving in Shaanxi.

6 《咸阳市志》，咸阳市地方志编纂委员会编，西安：三秦出版社，2000，720 页.

7 《三原县志》，三原县志编纂委员会，陕西人民出版社，983 页.

8 《咸阳市民族宗教志》咸阳市民族宗教事务管理局，西安: 陕西人民出版社, 1997, 110, 156.

This source reports that in August of 1917 when the membership had more than doubled from its original 26 members, the American missionaries appointed Liu Yuntai (刘云台) and Liu Huaijing (刘怀境) as church elders. In 1919, the missionaries established churches in Xian and Xinping (兴平).

9 《咸阳市民族宗教志》咸阳市民族宗教事务管理局，西安: 陕西人民出版社, 1997, 110, 156.

10 张冠儒:〈三原县中华基督教会见史〉《三原史资料》，中国政治协商会

议陕西省三原县委员会文史资料委员会，第七辑，1990.

[11] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒)，interview by author, 17 July 2006, Sanyuan (三原县), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[12] 《咸阳市民族宗教志》咸阳市民族宗教事务管理局，西安: 陕西人民出版社, 1997, 157.

[13] 《咸阳市民族宗教志》, 157.

Zhang Guanru (张冠儒)，interview by author, 17 July 2006, Sanyuan (三原县), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[14] 《咸阳市民族宗教志》, 157.

[15] Ibid.

[16] 《三原县志》，三原县志编纂委员会，陕西人民出版社，983 页.

[17] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒) interview by author, 17 July 2006, Sanyuan (三原县), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[18] Wang Hong (王红), interview by author, 25 July 2006, Xian, Shaanxi, personal notes.

[19] 张冠儒：〈三原县中华基督教会见史〉《三原史资料》，中国政治协商会议陕西省三原县委员会文史资料委员会，第七辑，1990。

[20] Wang Hong 王红, interview by author, 25 July 2006, Xian, Shaanxi, personal notes.

[21] Young, *The Living Christ,* 106.

[22] "His house in Jenho village three miles south-east of Gospel Village was another thoroughly Christian home. 'Christ is the Head of this Home' was a text on the wall that caught my eye and it was indeed the truth." Young, *The Living Christ*, 106.

[23] 《阎良区志》，西安市阎良区地繁殖编纂委员会变，西安：三秦出版社，2001, 881 页.

张毅辉编《临潼县志》，陕西省临潼县志编纂委员会，上海：上海人民出版社，1991，994 页.

张冠儒：〈三原县中华基督教会见史〉《三原史资料》，中国政治协商会议陕西省三原县委员会文史资料委员会，第七辑，1990。

[24] Young, *The Living Christ*, 106.

[25] Ibid., 64.

[26] "Here and in Fuyints'un we received a more cordial welcome from the Church leaders. We found the venerable Pastor Sun, Elder Wang and Schoolmaster Wang Ling-te* and all the other sturdy Shantung Christians "standing fast in one spirit, with one soul, striving for the faith of the Gospel: and in nothing affrighted by the adversary." They rather poured scorn on their Shensi fellow-Christians in Sian who had fallen so badly in the persecution; though it must be said in fairness that the Church in Sian had been and still was, in the main stream of the political current, while Fuyints'un, from the political point of view, was in a back-water and sheltered from the full blast of the storm." Young, *The Living Christ,* 55.

*"Wang Ling-te" was identified by Rev. Wang Hong as her grandfather, 王灵德 of Gospel Village.

[27] "Fortunately for the Church her Chinese leaders have remained steady and sane,

though sorely criticized and persecuted. Pastor Wang Dao Sheng in the Gospel Village, Pastor Kuo Hsi-sheng in the South District, and Pastor Li Meng-keng in the Sanyuan area supported by the chairman of the Shensi Synod, Elder Wang Yun-pai, have all manifested a spirit of sympathetic understanding and spiritual discernment which has guided the young Church through this stormy period of religious emotionalism."

George A. Young, "Effect of the War on the Church in Shensi," *Through Toil and Tribulation: Missionary Experiences in China During the War of1937-1945, Told by the Missionaries,* (London: Carey Press, 1947), 190.

[28] Young, *The Living Christ,*106.

[29] H.R. Williamson, *British Baptists in China 1845-1952,* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press Limited, 1957), 196.

[30] Wang Hong (王红), interview by author, 25 July 2006, Xian, Shaanxi, personal notes.

[31] Guo Dianan (郭奠安)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Fuxing Village (复兴村), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[32] Guo Dianan (郭奠安)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Fuxing Village (复兴村), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Young, *The Living Christ.*

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Young, *The Living Christ,* 109.

[38] Young, *Through Toils and Tribulations,* 190.

[39] Guo Xisheng married and had children at a very young age. His son, Guo Dianan reported that his father was only seventeen when he was born.

[40] Guo Dianan 郭奠安，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Fuxing Village (复兴村), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[41] "As far as I know it is the one and only purely Christian village in China. The Christians put it up themselves, and only those who definitely conformed to Christian principles could have part or lot in it." Burt, *After Sixty Years,* 21.

[42] Young, *The Living Christ,* 110.

[43] Young, *The Living Christ,* 117.

Burt, *After Sixty Years*, 130.

[44] Ibid.

[45] "A man thus trained to hold a public audience and to seize upon the salient and picturesque points in a narrative has, upon becoming a Christian preacher, great advantages. We have never had in Shensi a preacher who could so appeal to a popular audience as could Mr. Chou.... No Chinese evangelist in the city could so help the unversed in Christian trust to grasp its fundamentals."

J.C. Keyte, *Andrew Young of Shensi,* (London: Carey Press, 1924), 179.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Keyte, *Andrew Young of Shensi*, 181.

[48] Young, *The Living Christ*, 117.

[49] Burt, *After Sixty Years*, 130.

[50] Ibid.

[51] It is unclear when or why Dr. Li moved to Shaanxi.
[52] Keyte, *Andrew Young of Shensi*, 169.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Burt, *After Sixty Years,* 129.
[55] "Chinese doctors like Dr. Li Jen and Chang Chih Ch'eng rendered them invaluable assistance, serving with outstanding loyalty amid many anti-foreign demonstrations in the city."
Williamson, *British Baptists,* 118.
[56] Williamson, *British Baptists,* 118.
[57] Burt, *After 60 Years,* 129.
[58] Ibid., 130.
[59] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒), interview by author, 17 July 2006, Sanyuan, Shaanxi, personal notes.
[60] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒), interviews by author, 17 July 2006 & 27 July 2006, Sanyuan, Shaanxi, personal notes.
[61] Sun Ruilian (孙瑞莲), interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.
[62] Young, *Through Trials and Tribulations,* 190.
Zhang Guanru (张冠儒), interview by author, 17 July 2006, Sanyuan, Shaanxi, personal notes.
[63] Sun Ruilian (孙瑞莲), interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.
[64] Young, *Through Trials and Tribulations,* 190.
[65] Williamson, *British Baptists*, 171.
[66] 文继忠:〈高陵县中华基督教简史〉《高陵县文史资料》，中国人民政治协商会议陕西省高陵县委员会文史资料委员会编，第十五辑，2005，213.
[67] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒), interview by author, 17 July 2006, Sanyuan, Shaanxi, personal notes.
[68] Sun Ruilian (孙瑞莲), interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.
[69] Wen Ji Zhong (文继忠)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Gaoling (高陵), Shaanxi, personal notes.
[70] Sun Ruilian (孙瑞莲), interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.
[71] Young, *Through Toil and Tribulation,* 189.
[72] Williamson, *British Baptists*, 171.
[73] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒), interview by author, 27 July 2006, Sanyuan, Shaanxi, personal notes.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Williamson, *British Baptists*, 171.
[76] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒), interview by author, 27 July 2006, Sanyuan, Shaanxi, personal notes.
Feng Baoguang's neighbor, interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.
[77] Feng Baoguang's neighbor, interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐),

Shaanxi, personal notes.

[78] Wang Cuiying (王翠英), Feng Baoguang's daughter-in-law, interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[79] Young, *Through Toil and Tribulation,* 189.

[80] Wang Cuiying (王翠英), Feng Baoguang's daughter-in-law, interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[81] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒), interview by author, 27 July 2006, Sanyuan, Shaanxi, personal notes.

[82] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒), interview by author, 27 July 2006, Sanyuan, Shaanxi, personal notes.

[83] Bai Su Mei (白素梅)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[84] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒), interview by author, 27 July 2006, Sanyuan, Shaanxi, personal notes.

[85] 《咸阳市志》，咸阳市地方志编纂委员会编，西安：三秦出版社，2000，727 页.

[86] Bai Su Mei (白素梅)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[87] 《咸阳市志》，咸阳市地方志编纂委员会编，西安：三秦出版社，2000，727 页.

[88] Bai Su Mei (白素梅)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒)，interview by author, 17 July 2006, Sanyuan (三原县), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[91] Sun Ruilian (孙瑞莲)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[92] Williamson, *British Baptists,* 192.

[93] Williamson, *British Baptists,* 192.

[94] 《咸阳市民族宗教志》咸阳市民族宗教事务管理局，西安: 陕西人民出版社, 1997, 157.

[95] 《咸阳市民族宗教志》, 157.
文继忠，〈高陵县中华基督教简史〉，《高陵县文史资料》，215.

[96] 《咸阳市民族宗教志》, 157.

[97] 《咸阳市民族宗教志》, 157.

[98] 《咸阳市民族宗教志》, 157.

[99] Sun Ruilian (孙瑞莲)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[100] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒)，interview by author, 17 July 2006, Sanyuan (三原县), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[101] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒)，interview by author, 17 July 2006, Sanyuan (三原县), Shaanxi, personal notes.
Sun Ruilian (孙瑞莲)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐),

Shaanxi, personal notes.

[102] Williamson, H.R., *British Baptists in China,* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1957) p. 192.

[103] Zhang Guanru (张冠儒)，interview by author, 17 July 2006, Sanyuan (三原县), Shaanxi, personal notes.

Sun Ruilian (孙瑞莲)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[104] Sun Ruilian (孙瑞莲)，interview by author, 26 July 2006, Yongle (永乐), Shaanxi, personal notes.

[105] 王泽民：〈一代英才 - 王子元〉《山西基督教》，陕西省基督教三自爱国运

动委员，第 1 期，4 月 2006，32-33 页。

[106] Burt, Ernest Whitby, *After Sixty Years: The Story of the Church Founded by the Baptist Missionary Society in North China,* (London: Carey Press, 1937), 128.

While Burt refers to her as Mrs. Yen Mei Ling, George Young seems to be referring to the same woman by the name Mrs. Nieh Yen Mei Ling. The added surname was probably her husbands. However, Rev. Wang Hong's description of a prominent woman of Gospel Village called Yan Meilan (闫美兰) who was married to a man with the surname of Wu (吴) and had two sons may refer to a different person.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Burt, *After Sixty Years*, 127.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid., 127-128.

[111] Wang Hong (王红), interview by author, July 25 2006, Xian, Shaanxi, personal notes.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] 《咸阳市民族宗教志》咸阳市民族宗教事务管理局，西安：陕西人民出版社, 1997, 157.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Wang Hong (王红), interview by author, July 25 2006, Xian, Shaanxi, personal notes.

[118] "My work lay amongst the women and girls and almost entirely amongst the poor immigrants from Shantung. For the mothers, bible classes were held and all were urged to learn to read, a hard and endless task as at least 1500 of China's intricate characters must be learned in order to read one gospel. Regular visitation by cart of the villages around was the means of spreading the good news over a wide area. But while I deeply loved working for the mothers, our hope lay chiefly in the young. For the girls, a school was built in the Gospel Village and first 30, then 60 girls were boarded and taught. This was the first girls' school in the whole of our China mission. The parents contributed in kind towards their support. From the beginning, it was ever our aim in Shensi to inculcate the principle of self-support. This school was greatly blessed and I have often heard with joy that many of those

girls became the finest workers in the Chinese Church. They were taught their own Confucian classics, also writing, music, arithmetic and geography, but their favourite text book was the Bible and many of its chapters they committed to memory."

Doreen Raymer, "Souvenir of a Century," in *Lives Lived of Moir and Jessie Duncan*, by Jessie Duncan and Doreen Raymer, (Toronto: Windy Ridge Books, 2000), 38-39.

[119] Kwok Pui-lan, *Chinese Women and Christianity 1860-1927,* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 17.

[120] Kwok, 189.

[121] Young, *The Living Christ*, 106.

[122] Young, *The Living Christ*, 109.

[123] Ibid, 108. See quote on page 15.

[124] Ibid, 109.

## Chapter 5
## Reevaluating the Big Picture: Portrait of a Chinese Church

In this chapter, I examine the issue of indigenization in light of the information presented in chapters three and four of this case study. Specifically, the process of indigenization will be examined in the context of the Sanyuan area Christian communities with particular concern to determine at what point in history and to what degree the churches were able to achieve the "Three-Self" ideal of self-support, self-governance, and self-propagation. This will then be compared with the conclusions reached by the competing accounts in "official" Chinese histories and mission records.

The term "indigenization" has often been broadly applied and loosely defined. Steven Kaplan, in his introduction *to Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity*, noted:

> While blanket terms such as inculturation, adaption, indigenization, and contextualization may be of some use in characterizing the general processes which occurred, when applied to specific cases they tend to obscure rather than clarify important distinctions.[1]

Specifically then, this chapter only seeks to examine and evaluate the progress in the Sanyuan churches of one particular aspect of indigenization: the development of self-sufficient churches. While there are many legitimate and important aspects of the indigenization of Christianity in China which could be examined, this approach has been chosen because of the particular significance of the development of self-sufficient churches to Protestant church history in China and because the controversial nature of this particular aspect has caused many distortions in current historical accounts.

Throughout the history of Christian missions in China, the issue of indigenization has created controversy. From the time of the Jesuit missionaries, some form of inculturation or indigenization of Christianity was seen as essential to the success of their mission. For the Jesuits, the issue was how to best "clothe" their message and methods to fit the Chinese context. The Jesuits sought ways to ease Christianity into the Chinese cultural milieu, whether through wearing the dress of Confucian scholars or adopting and adapting common religious vocabulary to translate Christian doctrine. However, from the very beginning, it was difficult for missionaries to determine and agree on what was acceptable adaption and what was unacceptable corruption of their doctrine and practice. The inevitably ensuing debates within mission circles and extending to their superiors in Europe eventually led to the imperial prohibition of their religion, bringing a sudden end to that era in mission history. Some scholars have also concluded that the Jesuit missionaries approach to the acculturation of the Christian message was inherently flawed, making their message unintelligible to the Chinese, resulting in their failure to attract many converts or make any progress towards putting down roots in China, even before their eventual expulsion as a result of the rites controversy.[2] In either case, their failure to successfully adapt Christianity to the Chinese context resulted in its inability to put down roots in Chinese society.

In the age of Protestant missions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, missionaries once again faced these issues. However, this time the pressing need for indigenization was thrown into even starker relief against the background of the aggressive imperialistic expansion of the West. The specter of imperialism, which had secured the missionaries' entry into China, cast a growing shadow of suspicion over their missionary endeavors, causing both missionaries and Chinese Christians to

feel the need for indigenization even more acutely. Whereas the rites controversy consisted mainly of internal debates within the Catholic hierarchy, the issue of indigenization became an intimate concern, not only of the foreign missionaries, but also of the Chinese Christians who had to reconcile their new found faith with their Chinese heritage in an ideological environment that considered the two to be mutually exclusive.

Another major difference between the indigenization discussions of the Ricci era and the Protestant mission era lies in the focus and content of the debates themselves. For the Jesuits, the question of indigenization was primarily a question of cultural adaption and accommodation. Their goals were to adapt their appearance and their message to the religious and scholarly traditions of China in order to secure a platform for work. Thus the issues on the table included clothing, religious vocabulary, and most importantly, the issue of ancestral rites. The various Protestants missions also dealt with issues of cultural accommodation, from Hudson Taylor's adoption of Chinese dress to Timothy Richard's dialogues with leaders of religious sects to the never ending debates over the translation of religious vocabulary. However, the Protestants differing aims and strategies, in addition to their vastly different historical context, necessitated that they pursue a program of indigenization that went beyond the Catholic one of cultural accommodation. Whereas the Jesuit had pursued a trickle-down strategy of targeting the cultural elite for proselyzation, the Protestants sought to Christianize China through a campaign of evangelism and church planting aimed at grass-roots conversion. Thus early Protestant missionaries embraced the ideal of planting self-sufficient Chinese churches that could complete the evangelism and Christian transformation of China.

The ideal that self-sufficient churches should be encouraged to become Chinese

led, Chinese supported, and Chinese propagated became known as the "Three-Self" strategy. The early pioneers of this "Three Self" philosophy, the three being self-government, self-support, and self-propagation, were John Livingstone Nevius and Timothy Richard. Other missionaries and mission agencies, as well as many Chinese Christian leaders, soon came to embrace the "Three-self" ideal.

During the early 1900s, other historical forces came to bear which reinforced and intensified the missionary and Chinese call for a fully indigenous, self-sufficient Chinese church. The rise of nationalism and the growing influence of Marxist philosophy which condemned imperialistic expansion as the cause of the continued poverty and oppression prevalent in third world countries added impetus to the cause of indigenization. In addition, the Great Depression, which limited missionary resources, the Boxer Rebellion and the later outbreaks of anti-Christian violence brought to light the missionaries' precarious state in China and made the necessity of self-sufficient Chinese churches even more evident. Finally, the emergence of new theologies which called into question the superiority of Western Civilization and the Western expression of Christianity also encouraged those involved in the Chinese churches to pursue independence from Western mission organizations.

The "Three-Self" ideal was eventually adopted by the post-Liberation Protestant churches which united under the "Three-Self Patriotic Reform Movement," the forerunner of the official Chinese Protestant church in Communist China: The Three Self Patriotic Christian Church. The history of the development of indigenous churches in China has continued to be problematic for the Three-Self Church as they were founded on a specific (Marxist) interpretation of history to justify their existence, an interpretation which gives them an exclusive claim to the title of "Three-Self." According to this interpretation, the churches in existence

prior to liberation were irredeemably dominated by the imperialistic designs of the Western missionary enterprise and have only realized their true potential as independent, indigenous congregations under the Three-Self Reform Movement made possible by the Communist victory. In other words, "The government's Three-Self Reform Movement was directed towards self-government from imperialist control, self-support from imperialist money, and self-propagation away from imperialist "poison."[3]

This interpretation of Christian history has for the most part prevailed within the Three-Self Church up to the present. While some in the Three-Self have tried to offer a more nuanced view of the missionary era which acknowledges both missionary accomplishments and mistakes, the official position of the church has not changed. In fact, it cannot change, as its very existence is dependent on the assumption that pre-liberation Christianity in China was incurably tainted and dominated by Western imperialism. As late as 1989, K.H. Ting reiterated this argument:

> Brothers and sisters, if people can hang crosses on their bayonets, what is to stop them from putting bayonets on their crosses? In fact they have already done so. Imperialists have used the church in their aggression against China – this is an undeniable fact. Under the guise of preaching religion "missionaries" came to China with all kinds of political, economic, military and diplomatic baggage, and closely collaborated with the reactionaries....Since liberation our church has been going through a period of necessary uprooting and replanting; this is also a cleansing process. Only after passing through this stage, predestined by God, can \ the church be renewed as a place to glorify the Lord and bear a living witness. Therefore all those who really love the church are bound to welcome the Three-Self Patriotic Movement."[4]

In responding to an article critical of the Three-Self church's position that all

missionaries were imperialists, Shen Cheng'en (沈承恩) responded that the continued existence of the Three-Self Church depended on maintaining such an interpretation of history, responding, "If we were to accept his point of view, what would be left to necessitate and justify Three Self Patriotic Movement?"[5]

The official histories of the Sanyuan and Xian area churches reflect this philosophy in their biting condemnation of missionary abuses and their whole-hearted celebration of their removal and subsequent "liberation" of the church after the establishment of the Three-Self Church.[6] Thus, according to the Three-Self interpretation, the Chinese churches who welcomed and worked with missionaries before Liberation were necessarily, if perhaps unwittingly, oppressed and dominated by the imperialistic designs of their Western counterparts. Obviously, this presents a contradiction to the missionaries more optimistic evaluation of the status of the Chinese churches of the 1930s and 40s.

This study provides a useful opportunity to test these two perspectives, not merely as a theoretical debate between diametrically opposed ideological viewpoints, but as a case study to determine the relative historicity of two competing historical accounts through an examination of the individuals and events in question. Thus this case study can be usefully employed as a testing ground for both the official historical interpretation and the one offered by the missionaries. Ironically, both proclaimed the same goal – the establishment of "Three-Self" churches. And both claim to have accomplished that goal, but at different times and by different means. This study provides an occasion to examine the relative value of these two interpretations and their comparative usefulness for our understanding of the development of the church in China.

But before turning to a detailed look at the evidence in this case study, a brief

look at the modern academic discussion about the issue of indigenization of the Chinese church is in order. Daniel Bays has identified three main approaches that various scholars have taken in their treatments of this issue: through examining the thought of the Christian intellectual elite, the development of national church bodies as denominational churches moved away from their missionary roots, and the development of indigenous sects such as the True Jesus Church, the Jesus Family, and the Spiritual Gifts Society.[7] Bays himself has contributed substantially to the third approach, which he regards as the best example of a truly indigenous form of Christianity in Republican-era China. However, he also acknowledges the importance and relative scholarly neglect of the second approach: the study of the development and indigenization of denominational churches.[8] Bays notes, "What is needed are some balanced, in-depth studies of some major denominations or church groups, as well as of important individuals in the Chinese church, researched on a bilingual basis,"[9] which is exactly what this study seeks to supply.

Sumiko Yamamoto was another scholar who contributed significantly to the historical study of the Chinese church. Previous examinations of the indigenization question from the Chinese point of view had tended to focus on the thought and writings of Chinese Christian intellectuals who dealt with the problem in a largely theoretical and philosophical manner. Yamamoto's *History of Protestantism in China: The Indigenization of Christianity*, however, while devoting three chapters to a detailed examination of the thought and writings of three of these "Sino-liberals," as John K. Fairbanks called them, also devotes a large portion of her tome to investigating the phenomenon of indigenization among the Christianity known and practiced by the rural and poor.[10] This case study of the development of a rural church network in pre-liberation China supplements this latter track of investigation.

In her definitive treatise, Yamamoto identifies two aspects of indigenization which scholars should examine, which she labels ethnicity and embeddedness. By ethnicity, she means the process by which the universal Christian truths become expressed in Chinese forms. By embeddedness, she is referring to the process by which Christianity is able to "put down roots" in Chinese culture and become "closely attached to the hearts, lifestyles, and societies of its adherents."[11] She posits that the first requires autonomous thought, not just wrote memorization on the part of the Chinese Christians, and the second requires the existence of self-sustaining churches. Thus Yamamoto emphatically links the necessity of "Three-Self" churches to the process of indigenization. She asserted that as long as Asian churches were dependent on Western ones "politically, economically, and evangelically," they would never would never be able to become truly indigenous churches because indigenous churches are first of all, self-sustaining.

Some scholars have applied this approach by seeking to evaluate the progress that various churches made towards the "Three-Self" goal. For example, Norman Howard Cliff's *A History of the Protestant Movement in Shandong Province, China, 1859-1951* employs a detailed historical examination of the various Shandong missions in order to answer the question, "Did the missionaries achieve their goal of a Three-Self church?"[12] Significantly, Cliff does not ask whether the Chinese church achieved the goal of "Three-Self," but whether the missionaries were able to achieve it.

Yamamoto, on the other hand, seeks evaluate the progress which the Chinese churches achieved towards indigeniztion through a comprehensive analysis of the development of Chinese Protestantism. Specifically, she seeks to uncover the historical origins of the currently existing self-sufficient Protestant churches in China.

Thus her study is concerned primarily with the development of the church before 1949. Her study's greatest strength, according to one reviewer, "is the constellation of complex forces from both within and without, converging on China's pre-liberation decades which contributed to the effective sinicization and indigenization of Protestant Christianity in the People's Republic."[13] Similarly, this study seeks to uncover the elements of pre-liberation Christianity in China which led to the development of the indigenous, enduring Christian church in China today.

One of the important questions which researchers of Chinese Christianity must then ask is when was the "Three-Self" ideal achieved? Daniel Bays has written that within the denominational churches, "there was not a great deal of movement toward an authentically autonomous or indigenous Chinese church before 1937 – or before 1949 for that matter."[14] This has long been the conclusion of various students of Chinese Christian history. For example, one former missionary wrote in 1969,

> We have seen for some time before and during this period there was a gradual progression in the Christian churches, Protestant and Catholic, from a general policy of "paternalism" to "fraternalism." But at the most all this had accomplished was a measure of Sinification of the Western religious and denominational systems. They were not truly "indigenous" in the sense of "native," "belonging naturally," growing out of the spiritual soil of China.[15]

However, Cliff challenged Bays' conclusion by showing that the evidence within the Shandong missions does not warrant such a late date.[16] The evidence compiled from this study of the Sanyuan area churches seems to confirm Cliff's challenge. In fact, the evidence found both in the mission records and in the biographical sketches of Sanyuan area Christians shows that these Christians individually and these churches communally were operating with a considerable

degree of autonomy and independence at an earlier stage than either the official histories or the mission histories acknowledge.

Chapter three introduced the history of the BMS mission in Shaanxi, covering its history in light of the three phases of Chinese Protestant mission history. In Shaanxi, the first phase was abbreviated as the work there did not start until 1892 and began with a transplanted congregation and missionaries. The second stage, from 1900 through the 1920s, in which the mission was at its peak in terms of the number of staff, the geographical area it covered and the extent and variety of mission work, saw the mission use its relatively plentiful resources to both to expand its geographical influence across the province and to focus more on urban and institutional work such as educational endeavors, hospitals, YMCAs and orphanages. The third stage beginning in the middle of the 1920s and continuing until the Communist Revolution was marked by the decline of mission work in China. The signs of mission decline in Shaanxi must mainly be read between the lines of the missionary records, as their writings, written mainly to their supporters, emphasized the continued growth and strength of their work. However, the mission did overstretch itself, and institutions and even whole mission stations closed down because of their inability to "occupy" their "claims." Significantly, missionary observers recorded that this period also saw the transformation of the Shaanxi Baptist churches into an independent, indigenous Chinese church.

Chapter three continued with a description of the mission work itself, as described by the missionaries. In each of these areas, the contribution and involvement of Chinese Christians was essential. First of all, in their evangelistic work, the missionaries acknowledged their debt to the Chinese evangelists and pastors who did some of the most effective evangelistic work. The second priority

of the missionaries was educational. Once again, these labor intensive operations required Chinese assistance and cooperation. For example, it was necessary to hire Chinese teachers, often women trained in mission schools, to teach in their schools. Third, the missionaries embarked on a wide variety of institutional projects including building hospitals, founding YMCAs, providing famine relief, and opening orphanages. Once again all these projects relied heavily on the help of Chinese "right-hand men."

Finally, chapter three examined the attitude that missionaries expressed in their writings both toward their own role in Chinese society and the view that they held of their Chinese colleagues. It was shown that missionary roles and attitudes developed and changed over time as the Chinese church matured and produced more educated leadership, which left less need for hands-on missionary leadership of the churches and caused missionaries to pursue other avenues of service outside of the church. It was also seen that the quality of the relationships between missionaries and different Chinese Christians seemed to vary according to the position the Chinese held within the church or mission. Missionaries' highest praise was reserved for gifted preachers and evangelists, and they less frequently mentioned Chinese reformers, educators, or politically active progressives. Chapter three closes by questioning the accuracy of the missionaries' evaluation of the state of the Chinese church as fully independent and indigenous by the late 1920s and early 1930s. This chapter will attempt to answer that question by critically examining the historical evidence for such claims found in the mission records, local histories, and oral accounts.

Chapter four looked at five groups of Chinese Christian leaders active in the Sanyuan area church network. The first was the founders, who it was shown

worked closely with the missionaries, but were not dependent on them and showed a significant amount of independence and initiative. Then the Guo family's story was introduced, which demonstrated the existence of Christian villages established without any foreign guidance, although they did later come to develop a relationship with the missionaries. The accounts of three right-hand men, while relying on limited resources, called into the question the assumption that it was the "missionary helpers" who accomplished most of the real work of the church and were the most instrumental agents of indigenization. The stories of three Christian women revealed increased opportunities for women in the church and significant participation of women in the Christian communities and mission contexts. In the final group of Chinese Christians, "The Second Wave," we saw the second and third generation of well educated Christian leaders zealously pursuing highly diversified courses of Christian endeavors with decreasing missionary support and guidance.

While the Sanyuan area churches and Christian villages, established by immigrant families without the initial direction or assistance of foreign missionaries, show a significant amount of independence from the beginning of their history, it was the second and third generation of Christian leaders who demonstrated a truly remarkable amount of autonomy, creativity, and independence in the expression and propagation of their faith. The fact that this "Second Wave" of Chinese Christians lived during uncertain times at a crossroad in Chinese history makes their accomplishments even more extraordinary.

Daniel Bays has said that from the late 1920s onward, the mission enterprise in China entered a stage of decline. However, while foreign missions went into decline during this period of political tumult and national change, the Chinese church was coming into it own. This is the mainly the period that the five men whom I

described in the "Second Wave" section of the last chapter lived and worked. In addition to the five men described in that section, three others, Wang Daosheng, Wang Lingde, and Guo Xisheng, should also be included, as they also belonged to the generation of church leaders that led the church through this tumultuous period from the revolution and the republican era, through the war period, and into the New China.[17]

From the point of view of church history, perhaps the most valuable aspect of these eight men's stories is the light they shed on the process of the indigenization of the church during this period. Their lives reveal a church that has become almost entirely Chinese led, Chinese supported, and Chinese propagated long before the Three-Self church was established in 1951. In addition, the efforts of these men joined by that of many other Christian men and women truly began to make an impact on Chinese society. As men who dedicated their lives and work to the Christian cause in China, their stories reveal many of the causes, effects, and characteristics of the indigenization process, each of which will be explored in detail below.

Before turning to an analysis of these men's lives which reveal many of the features of this fledging indigenous church, it is only fair to first outline some of the characteristics of the BMS mission which also facilitated the early indigenization of the churches with whom they worked.

First of all, the BMS had never been an aggressively expansionistic mission. The headquarters in London had encouraged their missionaries from the beginning of their work in Shandong to focus on consolidating and strengthening their existing stations rather than on opening new ones, to the frustration of more ambitious missionaries such as Timothy Richard. This trend continued throughout the BMS

involvement in Chinese missions, even to the point of pulling out of new stations, such as the one established in Yenan, when personnel and funding became stretched too thin. In general, new BMS stations were established either as a result of natural disasters or as a result of the immigration of sections of their Christian communities to new areas. These migrations, which occurred several times, were generally motivated by economic, not evangelistic factors. The church in Yenan, as well as those in many other villages of Shaanxi were established by Chinese evangelists and immigrants. In addition, the Gospel Village church commissioned a group of immigrants to start Christian work in Xinjiang in 1947. This relative reluctance of the BMS to pioneer new works in far-flung regions allowed the native church the time and space to take the initiative and responsibility for spreading the church to new regions.

Second, the explicit policy of the BMS mission was to cultivate and encourage as much self-sufficiency in their congregations as possible from the very beginning of their existence. The BMS, unlike many other missions, refused to pay their pastors and evangelists a salary, instead insisting that the local congregation support them. They also asked that the church buildings and school rooms be supplied by the local communities. However, the BMS did have to foot the bill for the expensive medical work that they embarked on, and they also seemed to have rented or bought property at times which were used by the church. When the BMS churches formally broke with the mission and joined the CCC in 1933, the missionaries expressed their approval. The BMS churches of Shaanxi, as well as those in Shandong, were relatively early in achieving this mark of independence. As late as 1937, only one-fifth of all denominational churches had joined the CCC.[18] The BMS policies favoring Chinese governed and supported congregations and

institutions encouraged the development of self-sufficient Christian communities in Sanyuan, which was their intended goal.

The third factor which contributed to this trend was the precarious state of the missionary presence in China. BMS missionaries were forced to completely evacuate Shaanxi three times from 1900 to 1928, and were sometimes gone for over a year. Each time they returned with reduced numbers and it was often difficult to pick up the work where they left off. These frequent evacuations, in addition to the already high turnover rate within the mission community made them a less than fully reliable source of direction and support for the nascent Chinese churches. Their absences forces Chinese Christians to take up more fully the mantle of church leadership. In fact, during the missionaries' absence in 1927, the Xian churches took the opportunity to seize all the church and mission properties and at first refused to return them when the missionaries returned over a year later.

Finally, the proliferation of mission societies operating in China in the early 1900s also contributed to the increasing independence and unity of Chinese churches. From 1900 through the 1920s, a greater diversity of mission societies arrived in China including an abundance of "faith missions," a concept pioneered by the CIM, Pentecostal missionaries from the Azusa street revival and the newly established Assemblies of God, and non-orthodox groups such as the Seventh Day Adventists. This visibly increasing disunity within the mission community led Chinese Christians to question the validity of foreign denominations in the Chinese context and ironically resulted in many calling for greater unity within the Chinese churches apart from denominational divisions.

In addition to these characteristics of the BMS in particular and the changing situation of Chinese missions in general which facilitated the indigenization of the

Sanyuan area churches; other factors from sources both internal and external to the church also contributed to the churches' increasing independence from the mission. Internally, the unprecedented growth of the church and the development of a larger group of educated church leadership provided the necessary resources for the church to establish itself as a robust, Chinese-led institution. Church membership had grown from only 700 in 1900 to 2,686 by 1925. During that same period, the multiplying number of educated Chinese pastors kept pace with the growth of the church. By 1942, when Gospel Village celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, church membership in the Sanyuan network had reached 4,000 and the number of students enrolled in their schools numbered 3,000. This combination of steady growth in both church membership and educational opportunities for Chinese Christians leading to the development of an educated group of church leaders laid the foundation for the Sanyuan churches to emerge as mature, Chinese-led congregations.

While internally the growth of the church and the development of church leadership helped to spur the church towards independence, externally political tumult experienced during these years of national crises also contributed to the indigenization of the church. Specifically, political developments produced at least three phenomena which helped to push the church towards independence and self-sufficiency.

First, anti-foreignism and the anti-Christian movement encouraged church leadership to seek more independence from foreign missionaries and more influence in the interrelated aspects of church and mission work. Daniel Bays has pointed out that indigenous Christian sects such as the True Jesus Church were extremely anti-foreign in ideology to the point of condemning all pastors of churches with

foreign associations to hell.[19] Anti-foreignism also had an impact on the denominational churches. Jessie G. Lutz's has demonstrated that the anti-Christian movements were a force which increased Chinese demands for and actual transfers of control over various church positions and institutions in the 1920s.[20] The increasing involvement of Chinese leadership in the church can be seen by the increase of Chinese delegates to the National Christian Conference from six or seven in 1907 to over half of the 1,110 participants at the 1922 conference.[21] The independence movement, which was motivated in part by anti-foreign elements, resulted in the establishment of a Shaanxi branch of the Chinese Independent Church in 1913 and was even supported by Sun Hanqing, known by the missionaries as the most ardent supporter of the BMS.

When the anti-Christian movement heated up in the early 1920s, missionaries and Chinese leaders felt increased pressure to respond with reform to the accusations of foreign domination and imperialism within the church. Before the 1920s, the goals of nationalists, a modernized and strong China, and those of Protestants, a modernized and Christianized nation, seemed to complement one another, and thus Christianity enjoyed the favor or at least toleration of most Chinese nationalists. However, the ideological climate changed in the 1920s as Marxist and Leninist philosophies were popularized, leading students and intellectuals to blame Western and Japanese imperialism and aggression for all of China's problems. Christianity, with its ties to missionaries and foreign institutions, was denounced as a form of cultural imperialism.[22] Christians, who previously may have seen their religion as a modernizing force, were now publicly embarrassed by their close associations with missionaries, and especially the control that they still exerted over much of church life. Chinese Christians started to push for more independence from the

missionaries, to prove that they were not foreign dominated institutions. The Sanyuan churches reached a compromise solution in 1925, establishing a United Church Council made up of twelve missionaries and twelve Chinese which govern the Sanyuan BMS churches.[23] However, this was short lived as in 1927 the Church of Christ in China (CCC) was formed and in 1933 the Shaanxi BMS churches formally cut their ties with the English Baptists and officially joined the CCC.[24]

Second, the growing political and social consciousness developing in China since the turn of the century inspired and influenced church leaders to greater participation in social service and political activism. Church leaders, both ordained ministers and laymen, were not isolated from the political storm that was brewing across the nation and they embarked on projects which reflected the concerns of Chinese society in general during this period. Ryan Dunch has demonstrated that Fuzhou Christians in the Republican period were a vital and active part of the progressive nationalism of the early 1920s.[25] Similarly, Sanyuan Christians attempted to address both the needs of the church and its members specifically as well as the nation and its citizens in general by embarking on various social and political endeavors. Education reform and agricultural development stood out as the paramount concerns of these rural Christian leaders.

However, some leaders also chose more overtly political routes. For example, Pastor Feng Baoguang established an anti-Japanese war service organization. Pastor Sun Xiangpu supported the war effort during this period by representing the church at communist party meetings. Obviously, the most politically active church leader was Wang Ziyuan who spent half his adult life working in various official government positions.

Third, a second influx of immigrants to Shaanxi took place as refugees from the

Japanese occupation flooded the province. Among these refugees were Christians from various denominations and indigenous sects. Some refugees came from BMS churches in Shandong, such as Pastor Feng Baoguang, and were able to quickly and seamlessly transition into the Sanyuan Christian community. Others from indigenous sects such as the Jesus Family, the True Jesus Church and the Spiritual Gifts Society, however, brought their own variant theology, practice, and community with them and did not seek to be absorbed into the existing churches. The competition that of these independent sects represented was another factor which instigated reform within the Sanyuan church network.

Pastor Zhu Zhongyu, of the Spiritual Gifts Movement and one of the leaders of the charismatic revivals, was one of these refugees. The Spiritual Gifts Movement grew out of an indigenous revival which began in 1928 in Feixian of Shandong province. A missionary in Shandong described the revival as bringing "both renewal and division" to their churches.[26] This movement was brought to Shaanxi by immigrants such as Pastor Zhu Zhongyu and was influential in the Shaanxi churches during the resulting revivals which swept the province in the late 1930s and 40s. However, this was not merely a tide of religious emotionalism which swept through the uneducated rural masses during a time of national crisis. As Pastor Zhu Zhongyu illustrates, having taught in a Nanjing seminary and authored many commentaries and books, the charismatic movement was not without well-educated leaders. In addition, the movement was not only concerned with spiritual revivals, but also emphasized social service, improvement, and reform, as can be seen in the work of Li Haifeng and Wang Ziyuan whose social projects were partially motivated by their involvement in the charismatic revival movements. The progressive ideal of those involved in these movements probably also influenced the established

Sanyuan area churches.

The combination of these internal and external forces caused the churches to become more "Three-Self" in operation. The various effects which resulted from the indigenization process are illustrated clearly in the stories of Chinese Christians which were presented in chapter four, particularly in the stories of the second and third generation Christian leaders.

First of all, the indigenization of the church is seen in the increasing self-sufficiency both of the church and its associated institutions. The church became more financially independent. For example, Li Haifeng and Li Menggeng raised funds for their agricultural projects and church buildings from solely Chinese sources. Evangelistic and outreach projects were mainly manned and initiated by Chinese pastors, evangelists and laymen. The extensive evangelistic crusades undertaken by Li Haifeng and his bands of evangelists are a typical example.

The trend towards indigenization also extended to institutional work. Pastor Feng Baoguang took over the BMS Bible School as its first Chinese principal during this period. Wang Ziyuan established several Christian schools on his own initiative and with no missionary support. Li Haifeng and Wang Ziyuan both embarked on various agricultural development and training projects in the name of Christ. Indigenization can be seen in both the church and Christian institutional work. However, the line between evangelistic or religious projects and social service or development projects was never clearly defined. For example, Li Haifeng's experimental farms operated in a commune like fashion and included schools and churches for those who worked there. Additionally, the profits from his agricultural developments would be funneled back into the church to support evangelists, schools, and orphanages.

Secondly, indigenization led to growing theological and organizational independence for the church. While missionaries were wary of and at times adamantly opposed to the "vagaries" of the charismatic movement, even some of their most "loyal" pastors at times worked with various leaders in the charismatic movement. Li Haifeng, although converted in a Baptist hospital by a Baptist missionary, worked extensively with Pastor Zhu Zhongyu, Pastor Zhu Kunyu, and Zhu Xin from the charismatic movement. Another example is Sun Ruilian, one of Li Haifeng's evangelists, who attended the BMS Bible School before her involvement in the revival movements in the Sanyuan countryside. Pastors and church leaders felt free to choose their own course and cooperate with Christians of other denominational backgrounds, even those disapproved of by the missionaries.

A third effect of the increasing independence of the church was a shift in the Chinese leadership's priorities in pioneering new works. As church leadership and initiative shifted into Chinese hands, the strategies and priorities for church expansion changed. Cliff enumerated the changes as follows:

> The priorities of the mission churches may be described thus:
>
> 1. Erecting a church building, and Chinese preachers working under a missionary
> 2. The commencement of institutional work as an aid to evangelism
> 3. The gathering of a congregation, and working towards self-support
> 4. The attaining of self-government after the calling of a pastor
> 5. The pastor carrying out the work of self-propagation
>
> But the work of the churches was carried out in this order:
>
> 1. Self-propagation by the Chinese Church leaders
> 2. The formation of a self-governing body.
> 3. The achieving of self-support.
> 4. Developing from a growing congregation to the building of a church.
> 5. The running of institutional work as a result of church growth.[27]

The major changes in the growth strategies of indigenous churches were the priority of achieving self-government and self-support and the corresponding delay of building church buildings and establishing institutional work. In Sanyuan, this pattern seems to have been followed to some degree, as new works were begun by itinerant evangelists and church buildings were only built much later when congregations or a wealthy church member provided the means to do so. This is a marked change from the strategy of the early Sanyuan missionaries, whose first priority upon arriving in Shaanxi was to help the congregation build a church building.

A fourth effect of the indigenization of the church in this period was the marginalization of the missionary. Wang Ziyuan, although educated in BMS primary and middle schools, even went as far as to overtly and repeatedly refuse any help, financial or otherwise, that missionaries offered him for his work. As the Chinese church became able to stand on its own two feet, it no longer felt the need to hold the hand of the missionaries. However, missionaries still cooperated closely with some Chinese church leaders, such as Pastor Feng Baoguang and Guo Xisheng.

Corresponding to the marginalization of the missionary, the move towards indigenization also saw the rise of lay Christian work. Li Haifeng and Wang Ziyuan found no need for ordination to embark on their programs of evangelism, church planting, agricultural development, educational reform, and other social services. Wang Ziyuan was finally ordained as a church elder in the early 1950s, however, because of his church's demand that he take up pulpit duty and his own refusal to do so as a layman.

Finally, the indigenized Sanyuan church revealed itself to be a diversified church. As immigration brought in new Christians from various provinces,

individual churches became much more diverse in composition and the range of church denominations and sects in the Sanyuan area also became more varied. Additionally, the work which church leaders and laymen embarked upon in response to national circumstances, the local situation, and the needs of its members was highly diverse, ranging from famine prevention and irrigation projects to the establishment of self-supporting rural primary schools to the training of church leaders. In conclusion, these Christians' lives reveal the Chinese church unleashed: independent, indigenous, and diverse.

How does this picture of the Chinese church compare to the one presented by the official histories and the mission histories? First of all, while mission histories did not mention many important Chinese Christians and failed to record much of their accomplishments, the missionary assessment that the Chinese churches had become genuinely Chinese led, largely self-sufficient congregations by the early 1930s seems to be more accurate than the "official" conclusion that the development of these congregations was stunted as long as the influence of foreign missionaries remained. Both missionaries and Chinese Christians deserve credit for their accomplishments in bringing the Christian faith and Christian works to the cities and villages of Shaanxi; but by the early 1930s, it appears that the bulk of the initiative, drive, and actual work involved seems to have come from the Chinese themselves.

This study not only builds a case for a relatively early actualization of the three-self ideal, it also challenges the nature of the changes that occurred as a result of the establishment of the official Three-Self church. After Liberation, the Sanyuan network of churches officially joined the national Three-Self Patriotic Christian Church established in 1951. The Three-Self Church's first ambition was to cleanse the church of the foreign ties which had polluted Chinese Christianity with

their imperialistic associations. However, while the Sanyuan churches officially welcomed the opportunity to sever all their foreign ties and join the Three-Self Church, it seems that instead of achieving a new level of maturity and independence signaled by the cutting of the umbilical cord, their wings were clipped. The establishment of the Three-Self Church actually ended the most vibrant and expansive period that the Sanyuan area churches had experienced up to that time.

Schools, both those established by missionaries and independently by the Chinese Christians themselves, were handed over to the government and completely secularized. Similarly, universities were either handed over to the government, disbanded, or moved outside of mainland China. Pastors were forced to quit their full-time work in churches, schools, and other Christian institutions and return to their farms or find other means of support, such as the condensed milk factory established by several pastors. Agricultural initiatives like Li Haifeng's experimental farms were abandoned in favor of Communist land reform and the eventual establishment of large communes. Public revival meetings and evangelistic itenerations were canceled. Almost all the fruit of Christian labor, both that which was produced in collaboration with missionaries and even more significantly those of independently acting Chinese Christians was stripped from the tree of the Chinese church. The Communist victory and the subsequent advent of the Three-Self Church did not liberate the Chinese church; it emasculated it.

In addition, the existence of Chinese led, self-sufficient churches before Liberation calls into question the commonly held assumption that it was the exodus of missionaries that caused the seeming collapse of the church in China. The evidence in Sanyuan shows that the churches there were probably already prepared to survive and even thrive without any missionary assistance at all. Instead, it

seems that is was rather the harsh policies and controls imposed by the government, often through its influence on the Three-Self Church, which caused to church to become relatively powerless and seemingly invisible in Chinese society. Thus, we can say that the indigenous, independent Chinese church of today did not originate either chronologically or causally with the establishment of the Three-Self Church, but rather with the organic development of indigenous, Chinese churches in the 1920s and 30s whose faith has endured and whose works have not been forgotten.

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[1] Steven, Kaplan ed. *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity,* (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

[2] Jackques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures,* (Cambridge: Cabridge University Press, 1985).

[3] George N. Patterson, *Christianity in Communist China,* (Waco: Word Books, 1969), 70.

[4] K.H. Ting, *Selected Writings of K.H. Ting,* Raymond L. Whitehead ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 143.

[5] 沈承恩：《关于帝国主义利用基督教的问题》，108。

[6] A typical example can be found in the Lintong Gazetteer which records, "解放前，本县各教派的人、财大权都掌握在西方传教士手中，为帝国主义所利用。新中国成立后，中华基督教会在中华人民共和国政府宗教政策的教育保护之下成立了自治、自养、自传的"三自爱国运动委员会"，从此摆脱了帝国主义的束缚."

《临潼县志：陕西省临潼县志编纂委员会编》(上海：上海人民出版社，1991), 994 页。

See also, 李因信：《西安市基督教会历史简编》(西安：西安市基督教三自爱国运动委员会印行，1987)。

[7] Daniel Bays, review of *History of Protestantism in China: The Indigenization of* Christianity, by Sumiko Yamamoto, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* January, 2002, 39.

It is also important to note that scholars have also drawn on the philosophical and sociological theories in an attempt to define and describe the process of indigenization in cross cultural encounters. For example, see Lauren Pfister's "Indigenization is Identification: Problems and Possibilities attending the Actual Process of Indigenizing Christianity in Mainland China," in 林志平主編,《基督教與中國本色化》(台北: 宇宙光, 1990), 732-776. However, these more theoretical and philosophical approaches will not be covered in detail in this historical case study.

[8] Daniel Bays, "Indigenous Protestant Churches in China, 1900-1937: A Pentecostal Case Study," in *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity* ed. Steven Kaplan, (New York: New York University Press, 1995) 125.

[9] Bays, "Indigenous Protestant Churches in China, 1900-1937: A Pentecostal

Case Study," 139.

[10] Sumiko Yamamoto, *History of Protestantism in China: The Indigenization of Christianity,* (Tokyo: Institute of Eastern Culture, 2000).

[11] Yamamoto, 3.

[12] Norman Howard Cliff, *A History of the Protestant Movement in Shandong Province, China, 1859-1951,* (PhD diss., University of Buckingham, 1994), 287.

[13] Frankline J. Woo, review of *History of Protestantism in China: The Indigenization of Christianity* by Sumiko Yamamoto, *China Review International*, Fall, 2002, 588.

[14] Bays, "Indigenous Protestant Churches in China, 1900-1937: A Pentecostal Case Study," 125.

[15] Patterson, 69.

[16] Cliff, 288.

[17] The first three are not included here for two reasons. First, it seemed most appropriate to examine and place them within their respective lineages. Second, "the second wave" refers especially to leaders who were not directly connected to the original group of immigrants from Shandong. While the first condition does not apply to Pastor Sun Qiyi, I have left him categorized under "right-hand men" since the only record available on him were from a missionary source.

[18] Cliff, 372.

[19] Bays, "Indigenous Protestant Churches in China, 1900-1937: A Pentecostal Case Study," 135.

[20] Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-28*, (Notre Dame: Cross Roads Books, 1988).

[21] Daniel Bays, "Foreign Missions and Chinese Christians, 1850-1950: Towards Autonomy," Lecture given at Hong Kong Baptist University, May, 1995, 9.

[22] Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of Modern China 1857-1927,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 187.

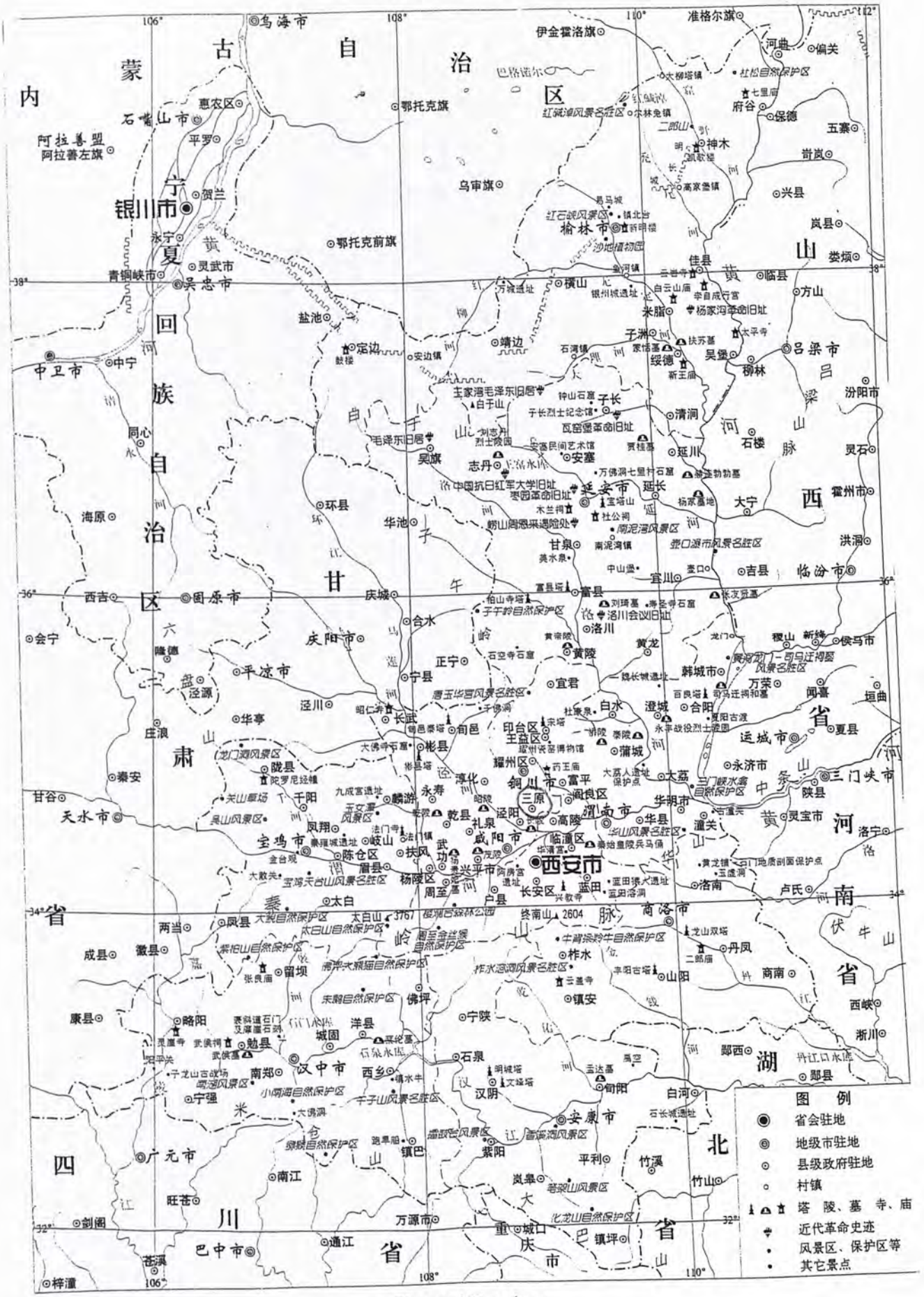
[23] George Young, *The Living Christ in Modern China,* (London: Carey Press, 1947) 104.

[24] Ibid., 106.

[25] Dunch.

[26] Cliff, 325.

[27] Cliff, 334.




Shaanxi Province

* Gospel Village

Sanyuan County

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